RABBINIC WISDOM

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RABBINIC WISDOM

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PREFACE

This book contains sayings and stories culled from the wide range of Rabbinical literature. It is one of the few attempts thus far made to put Talmudic material to pedagogic and inspirational uses. The teacher in the religious school might with profit ask his pupils to read one of these selections in order to furnish concrete, though often unfamiliar, illustration for the lesson to be taught. Nor can it be denied that, apart from pedagogic utility, this publication will serve as a religio-ethical reader. Miss Reizenstein does not claim to have translated the material she presents from the original sources, but desires herewith to express her indebtedness to the men whose translations of the Rabbinical literature into modern languages she has used. Bringing to her task exceptional skill and excellent judgment, coupled with valuable experience as a teacher in both public and religious schools, Miss Reizenstein has produced a book which will receive, I feel certain, a hearty welcome at the hands, not only of teachers and pupils, but also of a wider circle of Jewish readers.

William Rosenau.

Baltimore, Md.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Ambition	1
Industry	6
Moderation	10
Righteousness	16
Wisdom	21
Sin	30
Repentance	38
Honesty	41
Charity	45
Forgiveness	53
Forbearance	55
Sympathy	57
Service	59
Justice	68
Respect for Real Worth	76
Parental Care	81
Filial Piety	84
Duties to One's Fellow Men	87
Faith in Men	95
Trust	99
Gratitude	110
Loyalty	115
The Oneness of God	123
The Presence of God	127
God's Lovingkindness toward Israel	133
Israel and the Law	149
Israel and the Nations	158
Interpretation of Biblical Passages	172
The Sabbath	176
Moses	178
Wit and Wisdom	184
Quaint Midrashic Stories	192
List of Illustrations	201
Index	204

RABBINIC WISDOM

AMBITION

SURMOUNTING DIFFICULTIES

When the famous Hillel was a young man, he ardently desired an opportunity to devote himself to the study of the Law. Since he was extremely poor, he was unable to gratify his passionate wish.

But at last he saw the means whereby he might carry out the desire of his heart. He labored as hard as his strength would permit and supported himself with the half of his meagre wages, while the remaining portion he offered to the doorkeeper of the school of learning.

"This is for you," said he, "if you will permit me to enter and sit in the assembly, so that I may hear the words of the wise."

For several days the young man pursued this course, but in a short time his slender means were exhausted and he had not enough even to buy bread. It was not the thought of hunger that discouraged him. It was the doorkeeper's stern refusal to allow him to enter the school which grieved him more than all else.

But his grim determination helped him out of the difficulty. Climbing up to one of the windows of the

building, he lay on the outer sill where he could see and hear.

It was the eve of the Sabbath and bitterly cold. The next morning the rabbis came as usual to the academy, and though the sky was clear, the room seemed unusually dark. Looking about for the cause of the dimness, they discovered a human form on the outer sill, covered over with snow! It was the half frozen body of poor Hillel, who had lain there all night. Though it was the Sabbath, the good rabbis thought it no sin to kindle a fire and otherwise busy themselves to prepare food and drink for the homeless stranger.

Years later, when a man pleaded poverty as an excuse for not studying the Law, he was asked, "Are you poorer than Hillel?" and the story of the young student's unconquerable will was cited as an example of finding a way.

¶ ¶

LEARNING IS GREATER THAN GOLD

Hyrcanus was a very rich man who owned vast fields and great herds of cattle.

It was his custom to work daily in his fields together with his sons. He had noticed for some days that one of his sons, Eliezer, looked sad and troubled and he asked him the cause of his low spirits. The young man began to weep and the father, thinking that he was unhappy in the work assigned to him, gave him a different task. But the cause of the unhappiness was, apparently, not removed. Finally, as the father insisted upon an explanation, the young man declared, amidst tears which he was unable to control:

"I wish, with all my heart, to study the Law."

The father, amazed at the ardor of his son's desire, endeavored to dissuade him, since he had already attained the age of twenty-eight years. Rather let Eliezer get married, and perhaps his sons, in the course of time, might dedicate themselves to the study of the Law.

The young man made no reply, but was so obsessed with the one thought which pursued him that he could neither eat nor sleep.

But soon after, while he was wandering in the fields, a voice seemed to say, "Why weepest thou? If thou thirstest for the study of the Law, flee to Jerusalem to the school of the famous master Ben Zakkai."

Eliezer acted upon this thought as though it had been an inspiration. Secretly he fled to Jerusalem without making his departure known to any one.

After he had reached the doors of the academy, he stood speechless on the threshold, while the master, addressing him, inquired as to the cause of his distress.

"I weep," said Eliezer, "because of my ignorance. It is my ardent wish to study."

"Have you studied at all?" asked the master gently. "Can you recite the Shema?"

"I know nothing, nothing," sobbed the suppliant.

The good master endeavored to comfort him and began the instruction. Eliezer made remarkable progress and such was his zeal that in the course of time he far outstripped the other students. After the lapse of a few years he was recognized as one of the great masters of the Law.

In the meantime the brothers of Eliezer tried to induce their father to disinherit him. They painted his conduct in the blackest colors and left Hyrcanus no peace until he consented to their plans.

Thereupon Hyrcanus journeyed to Jerusalem for the purpose of legalizing the disinheritance. Several of his friends, who had come to meet him, conducted him to the house of Ben Zakkai, who was entertaining the most distinguished men of Jerusalem at a banquet. Hyrcanus was welcomed and seated beside Eliezer, whom he did not recognize, for the young man's appearance had greatly changed during his few years' absence from home.

In the course of the banquet, Ben Zakkai turned to Eliezer and said, "My son, it is now time to pour out the streams of your wisdom. Rise, and discourse upon the Sacred Scriptures."

"Master," responded Eliezer humbly, "a cistern can send forth only such waters as have been poured into it. What can I say that is unknown to you?"

"My son," answered the master, "the spring pours out its waters, and more is yet forthcoming. Rise and discourse upon the Law."

Obedient to his master's command, Eliezer began a learned discourse. His eyes burned with the light of inspiration, while from his lips flowed streams of wisdom.

The master, carried away with admiration, kissed his brilliant pupil on the forehead, exclaiming, "O blessed son of Hyrcanus! Happy is Israel, that boasts such a master!"

Hyrcanus sprang up in astonishment. "Of whom do you speak?"

"Of your son," replied Ben Zakkai, "Eliezer, who stands at your side."

The father, recognizing his son at last, embraced him and cried, "Happy am I, who possess such a son! I came to Jerusalem to disinherit you, but now your brothers shall be disinherited, and to you alone shall be my possessions!"

"Nay, father, let it not be so," replied the son. "Had I desired fields and cattle, I would have asked for them in my prayers to God, the Master of the earth. Had I desired gold, I would have prayed for it, for God is the Master of riches. But my desire and my prayers were for the study of His Word. God has answered my prayer and this suffices me."

INDUSTRY

LIFE AND ITS LAW

In the garden of a king there was a ditch of extraordinary depth; so deep was it that the eye could not see the bottom. One day the king hired many laborers to bring numberless loads of earth with which to fill the ditch. Some of the workmen, seeing the great depth of the ditch, foolishly said among themselves, "How is it possible ever to reach the bottom?" and abandoned the work.

Those more sensibly inclined remarked, "What matters it how deep it is? We are paid for our day's labor. We are thankful to have work; we will do our duty faithfully, and the ditch will be filled in due time."

Let not man say, "Oh, how unfathomable is the Law of God! It is deeper than the sea. How many commands to obey! Who can comply with them all!"

But God says to man, "Do faithfully each day the work allotted to thee, and let that suffice."

REWARD ACCORDING TO DEEDS

A king who owned a beautiful garden had a high tower erected in the midst of it. Many workmen were commanded to take part in the building of the tower. Those who labored faithfully were to receive good wages, but those who were idle or negligent were to be thrown into prison. Who is the king? The Lord of the Universe. What is the garden? The world, in which the Israelites have been commanded to obey the Law. What is the reward for their labors? Paradise, which the righteous earn by meritorious works. And the prison? Punishment after death for neglecting the duties of this world.

¶ ¶

ALL HONEST EFFORT HAS ITS USES

One of the greatest teachers of the academy at Jamnia, which was established after the destruction of the second Temple, was in the habit of saying: "I, am a creature of God; even so is my neighbor. My work is in the town; his in the field. He goes early to his labors; I to mine. He could not undertake my work, nor I his. He has had little opportunity for study, while it has been my fortune to learn much. But it matters not if one has learned much or little as long as one's thoughts are turned to God."

PERFORMANCE OF DUTY IRRESPECTIVE OF REWARD

A king hired laborers and assigned them to work in his garden without designating the wages they would receive, in order that the work which commanded but little pay might not be neglected in favor of that which would bring with it a greater compensation. At the close of the day he called one of the workmen and said, "Under which tree wast thou employed?"

"Under this one."

"This is a pepper tree," said the king. "Here is thy reward," and he handed the man a gold piece.

Then he called another, directing the same question to him. Upon receiving his reply the king said, "This is a caper tree; thy pay is half a gold piece."

A third workman, who had performed his labors under an olive tree, received twenty gold pieces.

"Why didst thou not make known to us the pay we were to receive?" they asked.

"Had I done so," replied the king, "how would my whole garden have received due attention?"

Rabbi Abin bar Kahana taught, "Do not say, 'I will follow this precept because a great reward is attached to its observance, but that one I will not follow because the reward is trivial.' God did not reveal the recompense for each and every law, in order that mankind might practice all with equal zeal."

WORK IS A DUTY

The prophet Elijah, in the course of his journeys, entered into conversation with a man who was deeply learned in the Written Law, but had only a superficial knowledge of the Oral Law, the commentary upon the Scriptures.

"Master," said he, "I would ask some questions of thee, but I fear to arouse thy displeasure."

"Speak freely. How can I be displeased when thou speakest of the Holy Word!" replied Elijah.

"Master, it is written in the Law that God provideth food for all His creatures; why then doth He not give bread to man?"

"My son," replied the prophet, "it is ordained that man shall labor, and God will then bless the work of his hands. Man would not be worthy of a blessing were he to spend his days in idleness, for work is a command of God. Man's ability to think and reason is a heritage by means of which he may fulfill his labors. Rob man of reason and judgment, and he becometh a beast, unable to provide for his daily needs."

¶ ¶

THE REWARD OF LABOR

Rabbi Tarphon said, "The day is short; the labor is great. The workmen are lazy, and the master is urgent. It is not the duty of a single person to complete the whole work, but no one is free to exempt himself therefrom. The Master pays well; the reward of the righteous is forthcoming in the future world."

MODERATION

GUARD THY TONGUE

Solomon in his wisdom declared that all the good and charitable acts which man may perform will not suffice to absolve him from the sins of his lips. Therefore let man take heed lest he utter slander, for the tongue is the most unruly member and is judged according to its deserts.

¶ ¶

NEGLECTED OPPORTUNITY

"Moreover he hath not seen the sun, nor known it."—Ecclesiastes 6:5.

Two men were making a sea voyage. When the vessel anchored at a harbor, one of them disembarked and entered the town where there was much of interest to see and to do. Returning to the ship, he asked his companion, "Why didst thou not also go up to the city?"

"What didst thou see there?"

"There was much to eat and to drink and many forms of entertainment."

"Didst thou take advantage of these pleasures?"

"No."

"Then am I not better off than thou for not having left my place?"

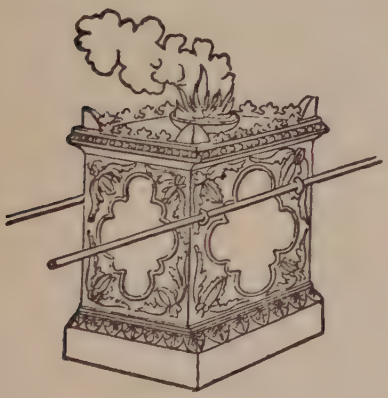
RISING ABOVE SORROWS

After the destruction of Jerusalem, a number of grief-stricken inhabitants, overpowered by the agonizing remembrance of the suffering they had witnessed, determined to partake no more of meat or wine

Rabbi Joshua, who disapproved of this extreme form of renunciation, which from day to day had been gaining more adherents, engaged in the following argument:

"My friends, what is your object in abstaining from meat and wine?"

"Master," they replied, weeping bitterly, "how can we do otherwise? It was the custom to offer the flesh of animals upon the altar; now the altar is no more. Wine, too, we were accustomed to pour out as a libation to the Lord; now we are no longer permitted to do so."



"Then you should refrain from eating bread also, since it was the custom to bring meal offerings."

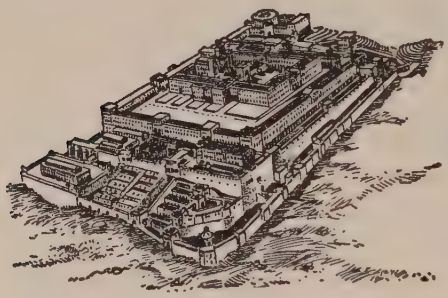
"Master, it is so. We will eat no more bread. Henceforth fruits shall be our nourishment."

"But the first gatherings brought to the Temple consisted of fruits."

"You are right. We will eat only of those fruits which were not brought as offerings."

"Then you should not even drink water, since water too was used in the sacrifice."

The mourners were silent, for they knew not what to answer.



Rabbi Joshua then continued, "I will not counsel you to cease all mourning, since our sorrows are too deep to be cast lightly aside. But excessive grief is wrong, for under its crushing force man would cease to exist. Let us not forget the sorrows we have shared, but at the same time let us endeavor to rise above them and take up with patience and fortitude the duties which God would have us assume."

¶ ¶

WEALTH IS OFTEN USELESS

In Jerusalem there lived a wealthy woman named Martha, who was accustomed to every luxury and extravagance. The most delicate of perfumes wafted from her person, and her feet rested on the softest and most costly of carpets. When famine threatened the Holy City, the selfish woman, secure in the possession of her vast fortune, remained indifferent to the sufferings of her fellow citizens.

One day she gave her maid a handful of coins, saying: "Go and buy me bread, made of the finest flour."

The maid returned and reported that there was none of that quality to be had, but that she could secure loaves of a coarser kind.

"Then bring me those," said the woman with a sigh.

The maid came back saying that this bread had been sold, and that the only loaves to be had were made of the very coarsest flour. The mistress fretfully bade her go and secure one.

This attempt too was without result, for by this time no bread of any kind was left in the besieged city.

Alarmed at this report, Martha determined to go herself and see what money could buy.

BRACELET.

Unused to the hard stones of the streets, her delicate feet refused to carry her any further. She sank fainting to the ground. Casting her gold and jewels upon the street, she cried, "This idle wealth can not secure for me even a piece of bread!"

Thus the prophet's words were fulfilled, "*Their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them on the day of the wrath of the Lord.*" *Ezekiel 7:19.*

LIFE AS A VOYAGE

There was once a great ship which had been sailing for many days upon the seas. Before it reached its destination, a strong wind drove it from its course, and it drifted to the shore of a beautiful island. The passengers were of different opinions as to whether or not they should leave the ship to explore the island. They divided themselves into five parties.

The first party determined not to leave the ship. "We will remain on board," said they. "A fair wind

may arise, the anchor may be raised and the ship may sail on, leaving us behind. We must forego the pleasure of examining the lovely island; safety counsels that we remain where we are."

The second party determined to go ashore for a short time to enjoy the perfume of the flowers and partake of the delicious fruits. They did so, returning in good time, all the better for having refreshed themselves.

The third party also visited the island, but they gave so little heed to the flying minutes that they reached the ship just as the sailors were weighing anchor. In the confusion, many lost their places and had to content themselves with less comfortable quar-

ters than those which they had enjoyed at the beginning of the voyage.

The fourth party remained so long upon the island enjoying the pleasures which it afforded that they did not heed the ship's bell of warning. "Let us linger a while," said they. "The sails are still to be set, and the captain will not leave without us."

So they remained until they saw the ship moving. In wild haste and confusion they swam after it and clambered up, but so bruised and battered were they that their injuries failed to heal during the remainder of the voyage.

Alas for the fifth party! So intent were they on their enjoyment that they did not even hear the bell. The ship had gone before they realized their error. Then the wild beasts came from the thickets and devoured some of them. Those who escaped this end ate to excess of the sweet fruits and died of the very food which had attracted them.

The ship is our good deeds, which bear us to our destination, heaven. The island represents the pleasures of this world, of which the first party refused to partake, although they might have enjoyed them in moderation with no harm to themselves. The second party accepted the proffered pleasures, but were wise enough not to let them interfere with their duties. The third party, though less moderate, managed to retrieve their error in good time. Even the fourth party was saved in the last hour, though they suffered injuries which never entirely healed. But the rest of the company, so engrossed with the pleasures of life that they forgot the future, so heedless of duty that they turned a deaf ear to the warning bell, met the end which their useless lives merited.

RIGHTEOUSNESS

GREATNESS IS RELATIVE

"Noah was in his generation a man righteous and wholehearted."—Genesis 6:9.

Although Noah was perfect in his generation, maintained Rabbi Judah, yet, had he lived in the time of Moses or Samuel, he would not have been accounted as such. Among the blind, he who is possessed of one eye is considered of perfect vision.

On the other hand, Rabbi Nehemiah contended that if Noah was considered righteous in his generation, how much more would he have been considered righteous had he lived in the time of Moses or Samuel. As, for example, if a virtuous man lives among thieves without sharing their wicked ways, how much more virtuous would he be were he to dwell among the righteous.

¶ ¶

THE ORGANS WHICH MAN CONTROLS

Said Rabbi Levi, "Man possesses six faculties. Over three of them he exercises entire control. The other three he can not altogether govern. The eyes, the ears, and the nose are not within his power, for he must see and hear and smell whether he will or no. But the mouth, the hands, and the feet are under his control. He can speak words of wisdom or, if he chooses, words of slander. He can teach his hands to perform deeds of benevolence, or he can permit them to rob and kill. His feet may wander into forbidden paths or he may guide them into the halls of learning."

PREFERABLE ALTERNATIVES

"Better is a handful of quietness than both hands full of labour and striving after wind."—Ecclesiastes 4:6.

Better is he who has learned the Halacha and followed its precepts, than he who has mastered the Halacha together with all the ordinances, without pondering over them.

Better is a handful of rest which the Sabbath offers than both hands full of care in the six working days.

God said, "Better is a handful of gifts to the poor than two hands full of burnt offerings."

¶ ¶

THE CHOICE BETWEEN REWARD AND PUNISHMENT

Thus taught Rabbi Simeon ben Judah: God sent to Israel a loaf of bread and a rod fastened together and said: "If you observe the Law, here is bread to eat. But if you follow not its teaching, here is the rod with which you shall be chastised." The Prophet Isaiah said: "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land. But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken."—*Isaiah 1:19, 20.*

¶ ¶

THE PATH OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IS PLEASANT

God showed to man two paths, the one for the righteous, the other for sinners. The path of sinners is full of thorns and nettles; that of the righteous is

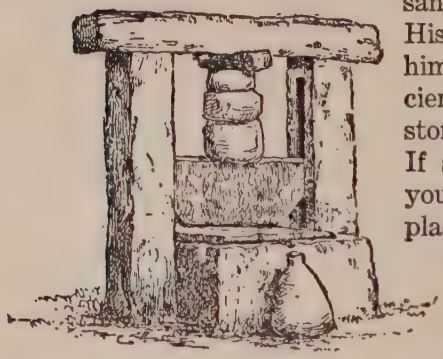
strewn with pleasant herbs. They who have not eyes to see enter the thorny path, and are torn and scratched by briers. But those whose vision is clear choose the path free from thorns. "He that walketh in his integrity as a just man, happy are his children after him."—*Proverbs 20:7.*

¶ ¶

KNOWLEDGE THE BASIS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

David said, "The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever." Let a man learn Midrash, Halachoth, and Haggadoth, but if his soul does not hate sin, he has gained nothing.

A man said to his friend, "I have a thousand measures of grain, a thousand measures of oil, and a thousand measures of wine." His friend answered him, "Have you sufficient space in which to store these possessions? If so, they are indeed yours, but without a place for them you have nothing."



Wisdom and knowledge belong to him who despises wrongdoing, for the fear of the Lord is his treasure.

Isaiah declared, "Zion shall be redeemed with justice, and they that return of her with righteousness."—*Isaiah 1:27.*

WAIT FOR THE END

"The day of death is better than the day of one's birth."
—Ecclesiastes 7:1.

Why? Because on the day of birth the life of man is an unwritten page, but after his death the world knows the good deeds that have been inscribed thereon.

Two ships sailed upon the high seas, one on its way out of the harbor, the other about to enter it. The onlookers rejoiced to see the outgoing vessel, but watched the other with regret. Then one wiser than the rest said, "I am moved by different emotions. One should not rejoice at the sight of a vessel which is about to set sail. Who knows what contrary winds and storms it may encounter? Let us rather be glad to welcome the vessel which returns to the harbor, for then we can see it enter in safety after having successfully weathered the storms of a long and dangerous voyage."

THE RIGHTEOUS ARE THE CHOSEN OF GOD

"Happy is the man whom Thou choosest."—Psalms 65:5

And blessed also is the man who comes near to God, though he be not chosen as were Abraham and Moses.

A Roman woman inquired of Rabbi Jose, "Can anyone who so desires draw near to your God?"

The rabbi, instead of replying, offered her a basket filled with figs, of which she selected a ripe one and ate it.

Thereupon he said, "Thou knowest how to choose. How much more does God understand it! All those who live righteously God chooses and draws nigh unto Himself."

WISDOM

KNOWLEDGE IS GREATER THAN WEALTH

"There is gold, and a multitude of rubies, but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel."—Proverbs 20:15.

If a man has gold and silver, pearls and diamonds, even all the treasures the world affords, and has no knowledge, what does it profit him? If he lacks knowledge, his possessions are as nothing.

When gifts of gold and silver were being poured into the sanctuary as free will offerings, the soul of Moses was troubled because he had nothing to give.

Then God said to him, "Truly the words of thy lips are more precious to me than jewels." It was then that God singled out Moses from among all men and imparted to him His divine message.

LEARNING MORE DESIRABLE THAN WEALTH

As Rabbi Jochanan was walking with several of his friends, he stopped and pointed to a vineyard not far away, saying, "That vineyard was once mine. I sold it for the benefit of the poor in order that I might be relieved of its care and devote my days to the study of the Law."

Continuing on his way, he presently called their attention to a fine field, remarking, "That field, too, was mine, but I sold it in order that I might have more time for the study of the Law." Again pointing to another field which they passed, the rabbi said, "This was the last piece of property which I had, but I disposed of it in order to devote myself wholly to the sacred writings with nothing to distract me from my chosen duties."

The friends inquired anxiously what provisions the good rabbi had made for his old age.

"Be not troubled," he answered smilingly. "I gladly relinquished those things which are of but transitory worth for a service which will be rewarded in eternity."

THE POWER OF ENVIRONMENT

"He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but the companion of fools shall smart for it."—Proverbs 13:20.

If a person enters a shop where spices are sold, his garments become permeated with the fragrance thereof. Let a man walk through a tannery, and the smell of leather will cling to his garments.

If a man keep company with a wise man, others will think him wise also. A companion of fools is looked upon as a fool, likewise, else he would not be found in their midst.

¶ ¶

LEARNING DIGNIFIES ALL MEN

Rabbi Simeon ben Jochai said: "There are three crowns: the crown of learning, the crown of priesthood, and the crown of royal dignity. The crown of priesthood was bestowed upon Aaron, the crown of royal dignity upon David, but the crown of learning may be the portion of any one who strives for it. He who acquires it is regarded as though he has gained all three, but he who fails to win the crown of learning is unworthy, even though he be priest or king."

WISDOM IS GOD'S SPECIAL GIFT

A king said to his beloved friend: "Choose anything in my kingdom, and it is thine." The friend thought, "If I ask for riches, only riches will be mine; if I choose honors, only honors will be granted to me. Instead, I will ask for the hand of the king's daughter, then both riches and honor will be my portion."

Thus, too, did God say to Solomon, "Choose that which thou dost prize above all else." Solomon replied, "I would ask for thy daughter, wisdom, then all else will be mine."

¶ ¶

REPETITION—A DISCIPLINE

A pupil of Rabbi Simeon ben Jochai was unfortunate enough to have a very poor memory. He took it greatly to heart and lamented his unretentive mind. One night he had a dream in which a voice called to him, "Cast three stones upon me, and I will come!" When he inquired the meaning of the dream, an interpreter explained that he was to study his lessons three times, after which he would be able to remember them. He did as he was advised, and his memory was strengthened to such an extent that he was enabled to retain what he had studied.

WISDOM BETTER THAN GOLD

There were three brothers who went to King Solomon for the purpose of learning the Torah. After thirteen years they prepared to return to their homes, and on the eve of their departure, King Solomon bade his treasurer bring three hundred gold pieces. The king said to the brothers, "Choose ye which ye would have. I will give to each of you a hundred gold pieces or three words of wisdom." After consulting with one another, they decided to take the gold.

When they had gone some distance on their way, the youngest brother said, "What have we done? Did we come hither to get gold or to learn the Law? Let us return the money and learn wisdom in place of it."

"If thou wouldst exchange the gold for three words of wisdom, go thy way," said the other two. "We will not return."

The youngest son went back to King Solomon and begged the master to take the gold and teach him further. The king at once began his instruction: "My son, when thou wouldst undertake a journey, be prepared to depart with the coming of dawn, and go to thy rest while it is yet day. This is the first word. When thou seest a stream whose waters are swollen, do not cross it, but wait until the waters subside. This is the second word. Never reveal a secret to a woman, not even thy wife. This is the third."

The young man mounted his horse and followed the path his brothers had taken. When he overtook them, they asked, "What hast thou learned?"

He replied, "The counsel I received is mine alone."

When they had travelled for nine hours, the youngest brother proposed that they remain in that place for the night.

"See, there is a spring, and wood, and grass for our horses. Let us stay till dawn breaks and then we can resume our journey."

"Thou fool!" replied the brothers, "we knew thou wast wanting in wisdom when thou gavest thy gold for mere words. There is yet time for three miles' travel, and we shall proceed." They did so.

The youngest brother cut wood, built a fire, and prepared a frugal meal, while his horse grazed near by. He constructed a rude shelter of bushes for himself and the horse. Then he lay down and slept peacefully.

The other two proceeded until night overtook them, but they could find no fodder for their horses nor wood with which to build a fire. Snow began to fall and since they were without protection, they and their horses died of cold.

At dawn the next day the youngest brother, refreshed by his night's sleep, continued on his way. Soon he discovered the bodies of his brothers. Weeping and lamenting, he dug a grave and buried them. He took the gold which had been their portion and continued on his way. In the meantime the heat of the sun melted the snow, and the waters which fed the streams rose so high that he was unable to ford the river. Dismounting, he waited until the waters subsided. As he walked along the bank he looked across the stream and saw two servants of King Solomon leading their horses laden with gold.

"Why dost thou not cross over?" they cried to him.

"I am waiting until the waters abate," he replied.

Not heeding his words, the two horsemen plunged into the stream, but as they were in the midst of it the current carried them down and they were drowned.

As soon as it was safe to cross, the young man proceeded on his way and soon reached his home.

He related to his brothers' wives the circumstances of their husbands' death. As for himself, he bought fields and vineyards and prospered greatly. When his wife inquired where he had obtained his money, he refused to satisfy her, but so insistent was she that finally he related what had occurred.

One day, in the midst of a quarrel, the woman cried, "Not enough that thou hast killed thy brothers, now thou wouldst kill me."

When the wives of his brothers heard this, they went to the king and charged their brother-in-law with murder. The king sentenced the accused to death. But the doomed man begged to be permitted to appear before the king, to whom he addressed the following:

"My lord, I am one of the three brothers who were thy disciples for thirteen years. I am the one who returned the gold pieces which were thy gift in order to exchange them for wisdom, and now it has caused my death."

The king recognized the truth of the young man's statement and said, "Fear not. The money which thou hast obtained from thy brothers is thine by right, for the wisdom which thou didst acquire has saved thee from death. Truly it is better to get wisdom than gold."

The king gave the young man his freedom, and he went his way rejoicing.

WISDOM ON LIFE'S PATH

An old man sat at the fork of a road. One path was level at the beginning, but toward its end it was overrun with briers and reeds. The other road was tangled with briers and thorns at the beginning, but it led finally into a smooth and unobstructed way. He warned the passersby of the condition of the roads, and they thanked him for his forethought.

So does Solomon sit at the road of wisdom, warning Israel with the words, "So I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun was grievous to me; for all is vanity and a striving after wind"—all but good deeds and penitence.

¶ ¶

WISDOM—TO WHOM VOUCHSAFED?

A Roman matron asked Rabbi bar Chalafta, "Is it true that 'He giveth wisdom unto the wise'? (*Daniel 2:21.*) Is it not rather true that God gives wisdom to those who lack it, and knowledge to the ignorant?"

The rabbi gave the following reply: "Suppose two persons came to you to borrow money, one of whom was rich, the other poor, To whom would you rather lend?"

"To the rich man," was the reply.

"Why?"

"Because even if he lost his money he would always be in a position to repay the loan."

"You are right. If God gave wisdom to fools, they would not know how to make the proper use of it; therefore God gives wisdom to the wise, that they may instruct others to walk in its paths."

THE USES OF WISDOM

Learning is much to be desired, but good deeds far outweigh it.

Of those who study wisdom, but fail to practice its precepts, it has been said, "Woe unto him who has no house, but builds a great gate before it."

Again, he who understands the philosophy of religion and has not the fear of God in his heart is like a man who has in his possession the inner keys of his house, but not the outer one. How, then, can he enter it?

Rabbi Eleazar said: "He who has more learning than goodness is like a tree with thick foliage and a slender trunk; a light wind can uproot it. But he who is virtuous, though he lack great learning, is like a tree with few branches and a sturdy trunk; not even a hurricane can shake its firm foundation."

Again, the end of wisdom is repentance and good deeds. What does it profit to know the holy ordinances unless one reverences father and mother? Reward shall be his who practices virtue, for by doing so he best honors God. Better never to have been born than to live only for selfish ends.

SIN

MAN—HUMAN AND DIVINE

"Male and female created He them."

When God created man, He said: "If I make him like the angels, he will live forever. If I create him like the beasts of the earth and field, he will die as do the dumb animals. Therefore will I endow him with qualities both heavenly and earthly. Thus, if he sins, he dies; if he sins not, he lives eternally."

¶ ¶

HOW TO AVOID SIN

"Wouldst thou avoid sin? Think of an Eye that seeth all, of an Ear that heareth all, of a Book wherein all thy deeds are inscribed."

Another wise man said, "Wouldst thou avoid sin? Think of these three things: Consider whence thou comest, whither thou goest, and to whom thou art responsible for thy deeds."

THE INEXCUSABLE SIN

Some persons may argue thus, "I will commit a sin and afterwards repent. Then I will commit other sins and repent again." To such no opportunity for repentance will be given. Perhaps one may think, "I will sin, but on the Day of Atonement I will fast and

pray and thus be forgiven." Neither fasting nor prayer will avail in such a case. The Day of Atonement is ordained in order that man may be at one with God, when he asks forgiveness for his wrongs. *But premeditated wrongdoing can not be atoned for by prayer or fasting.* Before man asks for divine forgiveness let him first seek forgiveness of his fellow man and truly determine to do him no further injury.

He who prays and fasts while trying to enjoy the fruits of his sins is like one who holds fast to a poisonous serpent the while he bathes in many waters. Not until he throws away the poisonous creature can he become clean, even though he try to cleanse himself in a thousand waters.

CAUGHT IN HIS OWN TRAP

A merchant, on his way to a distant city, carried with him a bag containing five hundred gold pieces. He thought to himself, "If I take this money with me, I may meet with a thief who will steal it. I will hide the gold until I need it."

He found a secret place where he buried the bag of gold in the earth. Though the merchant believed himself unobserved, there was one who watched him through a hole in the wall near which he buried his treasure.

When the merchant had gone, the other came from his hiding place, dug up the gold and made away with it.

A few days later, the merchant returned to secure the gold, which he needed in order to transact his business. When he saw that it had been stolen, he was sorely troubled.

"What shall I do?" he thought. "No one was in sight when I hid my gold. What can have become of it?" Looking about, he observed the hole in the wall, and it occurred to him that the owner of the house beyond it might have seen him in the act of burying the gold and stolen it.

He inquired of the villagers who was the owner of the house and when the information had been given to him, he approached the man saying, "I have heard it said that you are noted for your wisdom and counsel. I pray you give me your advice. I came hither upon a matter of business, bringing with me two bags of gold, one containing five hundred pieces, the other

eight hundred. Since I knew no one in this town to whom I could entrust the money, I secretly hid the bag with the five hundred gold pieces, but the other is still in my possession.

I wish now to ask you whether I should hide the second bag where the first lies hidden, or whether it would be better to place it in the keeping of some trustworthy man of the town."

The other made answer, "Take my advice and do not entrust your money to any one, but rather hide the bag where you placed the first one."

The crafty counselor thought, "If the stranger visits the spot again and finds nothing, he will not leave the other bag there. I will therefore return the gold which I took. He will then confidently hide the larger treasure and I can thus secure them both."

Acting upon his surmise, he fetched the stolen bag and returned it whence it had been taken.

The merchant thereupon visited the secret place, and happily found all that belonged to him.

NEVER TOO LATE TO REPENT

As long as man lives, God hopes for his repentance. A story is told of a band of robbers who were confined

in a dungeon. One of them succeeded in forcing a passage through which all escaped but one, whom the keeper seized and began to flog.

"Thou unhappy one!" he exclaimed. "There was a means of escape and thou didst not take advantage of it."

God says to sinners, "The way to repentance is open; if thou dost not follow it, thou shalt not escape."

¶ ¶

THE FUGITIVE FROM TEMPTATION

"My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not," said Solomon. This proverb has as its source the saying of David, "Evil pursueth sinners." He who is strong enough to withstand temptation is looked upon as one who obeys the whole decalogue. And he who obeys a commandment is as worthy of Divine favor as though he observed all the teachings of the Torah.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR WRONGDOING

A king owned a lovely garden in which were planted fruit trees of many kinds. Two watchmen were placed in charge, one of whom was lame, the other blind.

One day the lame man said to his companion, "There is some excellent ripe fruit."

"Come, we will eat of it," said the blind man.

"How can I walk?" asked the lame man, and the other retorted, "Can I see?"

However, the lame man climbed upon the blind man's back and thus they reached the place where the ripe fruit was to be found.

After a time, the king came to the garden and looked in vain for the fruit. When questioned, the blind man said, "My lord king, thou knowest I can not see. How could I have taken the fruit?" And the lame man said, "My lord king, thou knowest I can not walk. How could I have reached the place where the fruit grows?"

But the king was wise enough to guess what had happened. He said, "Thou who art blind, but possessed of strong limbs, didst carry him who is lame, but has eyes, and thus ye both robbed my garden of its fruits."

Thus, when God speaks to the soul, saying, "Why hast thou sinned?" the soul answers, "I am not guilty; it was my body that sinned." And the body defends itself by saying, "I did not commit wrong; it was the soul which had dominion over me." But God, in His justice, judges both the soul and the body together and passes sentence upon them jointly.

INGRATITUDE

A Babylonian, on his way to Palestine, sat down by the roadside to rest. There he watched two birds in conflict, and saw how one killed the other. Another bird flew to the scene, carrying in its beak a herb, which it laid upon the victim.

Presently the latter began to revive. "A marvelous herb!" exclaimed the traveler. "I will take it with me. It may stand me in good stead in rendering help to others."

Continuing his journey, he came upon a fox lying stiff and stark in the meadow. Laying the herb upon the animal, he watched with satisfaction how the fox recovered consciousness and ran into the woods.

Later in the day he found a lion, apparently dead, lying on a mountain path. Again he applied the herb, but the beast turned upon its rescuer, attacked and devoured him.

Keep aloof from evildoers lest evil befall thee!

¶ ¶

THE BALM OF LIFE

A merchant journeyed from town to town in the vicinity of Sepphoris, crying, "Who wishes to buy of the balm of life?"

Rabbi Yannai, who was seated in his study reading the Law at the time, sent for the merchant and said to him, "Come and sell of your wares to me."

The man answered him, saying, "Men of your stamp have no need of it."

The rabbi, however, persisted, and the vender drew out a psalm book and pointed to the verse: "Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it."

The rabbi afterwards said, "Never did the meaning of those words impress themselves upon my mind until I heard the peddler so earnestly raise the question: 'What man is he that desireth life?' Solomon, too, gave similar advice when he admonished man to guard his tongue and thereby keep his soul free from troubles."

REPENTANCE

A QUAINT ANALOGY WITH REGARD TO ISRAEL

The Israelites have been compared to a nut tree. As the nut is protected by the shell, so is Israel protected by the Law. If the nut fall to the ground and become soiled, it may be rubbed clean without harm to the kernel. So Israel, even if defiled by sin throughout the year, may become cleansed on Atonement Day.

¶ ¶

LOST OPPORTUNITIES

A certain man who owned fields and vineyards had spent his youth in selfish pursuits, without regard for anything except the gratification of his desires. The injunction to give tithes to the poor he had utterly disregarded.

But in his old age he became poor. "If I only had the fields and vineyards which I owned in my youth, how gladly would I give of my substance to the poor!"

"What good is it to complain and make promises which you can no longer fulfill?" asked his neighbors. "What is done is done!"

THE DISCIPLINE OF REPENTANCE

Rabbi Ishmael said, "If repentance had not been created, the world could not exist. But since repentance has been created, the right hand of the Holy One is stretched forth to receive the penitent every day, and He says, 'Repent, ye children of men'."

Even Ahab, one of the wickedest of the kings of Israel, who committed many wrongs, repented. He sent for Jehoshaphat, the King of Judah, who administered to him forty stripes thrice daily. Ahab spent his remaining days in fasting and in prayer and returned no more to his evil deeds. As a result even his repentance was accepted.

¶ ¶

ALWAYS BE PREPARED FOR DEATH

"Let thy garments be always white, and let thy head lack no oil."—Ecclesiastes 9:8.

Bar Kappara said to the wife of the ship's captain, "Why dost thou adorn thyself when thy husband is away?"

"My husband is at sea," was her reply, "yet he may appear at any moment if the winds are favorable. Is it not better that he find me ready to welcome him than that I be careless of my attire?"

Our forefathers were taught: "Repent a day before thy death."

A pupil of Rabbi Eliezer said to him, "Doth man know when he is to die that he should repent?"

"All the more reason for him to repent daily, for he knoweth not when he may be called hence," replied the rabbi. "Therefore, 'Let thy garments be always white'."

REPENT IN TIME

Some day, when it is too late, the wicked will turn to God and say, "We will repent," but God will say, "You foolish ones, the world in which you lived was like the eve of the Sabbath, but this world is like the Sabbath itself. If man fails to prepare on the eve of the Sabbath, what shall he eat when the Sabbath comes? Only those who have prepared shall eat."

This life may be compared to the land, and the life to come, to the sea. If one embarks on a voyage and takes nothing with him, how shall his hunger be satisfied upon the seas?

HONESTY

STRICT HONESTY

The rabbis have taught: "Thou canst learn of the righteousness of God from the acts of His creatures, for if human beings are upright and just, how much greater must the justice of God be."

A number of merchants came to the town in which Rabbi Pinchas ben Jair resided. They gave into his

keeping two large measures of barley, but forgot to claim them when they left the town. The rabbi sowed the barley and, when harvest time came, brought it to the threshing floor and winnowed it. The following year he again sowed the barley and threshed it in the

harvest season. This he did again and again until, after seven years, the merchants once more passed through the town, and this time asked the rabbi for the grain which they had left in his keeping. The rabbi said to them, "Come, I will show you your treasures," and gave them the gold which the plentiful harvests had yielded.

¶ ¶

SCRUPULOUS HONESTY

Simeon ben Shetach once bought a donkey from an Ishmaelite. Shortly after the purchase, the rabbi's pupils discovered a precious stone hanging about the animal's neck.

"The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich," said one of them.

"Nay," answered ben Shetach, "this doth not belong to me. I bought the donkey, and not the stone," and he at once returned the jewel to the Ishmaelite.

DISHONESTY DEFEATS ITSELF

A good man had entrusted to the keeping of a certain man named Bar T'lamion a hundred gold pieces. After a time he requested the return of the gold, but the rascal declared that he had already restored it.

The poor man pleaded in vain, but Bar T'lamion persisted in his denials. The defrauded one, having no other means at hand, forced Bar T'lamion to take an oath.

The rogue declared that he was ready to do so. Before setting forth with the other to the Temple, he secured a hollow tube and filled it with the coins, using it as a stick upon which to lean.

As he was about to take oath, Bar T'lamion turned to his companion and said with apparent friendliness, "Pray hold this stick while I declare my innocence." Then he solemnly uttered the words: "I swear before God that I restored to you the money you gave into my keeping."

The defrauded one, enraged at this baseness, cried out in furious wrath, at the same time beating the ground again and again with the stick.

The stick broke into pieces and the coins fell out and rolled in all directions. The rightful owner hastily stooped to recover them, while Bar T'lamion, his guilt thus discovered, cried, "Woe is me! Take what belongeth to thee. The gold is thine, while shame and punishment are my share!"

VARIED STANDARDS OF JUSTICE

Alexander of Macedon journeyed to a distant country in order to observe the manner of dispensing justice in that land. It chanced that two men appeared before the judge, one of whom made the following statement: "In the first field which this man sold me I discovered a buried treasure. It does not belong to me, for I paid for the field alone, and not for that which lies hidden in it."

The other said, "No; when I sold the field it included whatever was found therein."

The judge turned to the one, saying, "Have you a son?" and to the other, "Have you a daughter?"

Since both answered in the affirmative, the judge declared, "Let your children marry one another and the gold will belong to them both."

The judge, seeing Alexander's astonishment, inquired of him, "Do you not agree in the justice of my verdict?"

"Oh, yes," returned Alexander.

"How would the case have been settled in your country?"

"We should have sentenced both plaintiff and defendant, and confiscated the treasures for the king's use."

"Does the sun shine in your land?"

"Yes".

"Have you beasts in your fields?"

"Certainly."

"Then," said the judge, "it must be for the sake of the dumb animals that God causes the sun to shine and the rain to fall, for surely the human beings who dwell there are undeserving of such blessings."

CHARITY

WHAT GOLD CAN NOT PURCHASE

If a man steals with one hand and gives alms with the other, he will not go unpunished. God says to evildoers, "I have created two worlds; one in which to do good deeds, the other in which to receive the rewards for righteousness. If ye do not practice righteousness on earth, ye shall not enjoy the bliss of the world to come."

¶ ¶

CHARITY TWICE BLEST

One who is oppressed by poverty and misery, unable to overcome his misfortunes, murmurs at times against his unfortunate lot and thinks, "Am I not one of God's children? Why is there so great a difference between me and the rich man who has no cares in the world? Why is he enabled to sleep upon a soft bed while I must seek rest on this hard floor?"

It is the duty of those whose worldly possessions enable them to do so to stop the cry of distress by practicing deeds of charity.

God speaks thus to the heart of the charitable, "By deeds of loving kindness thou wilt intercede between the poor and his faith in Me, for by lightening his misery thou wilt help him bear his burdens and renew his trust in My providence."

SELF-DENIAL THE BEST CHARITY

It is related of certain rabbis that, while collecting donations for a worthy cause, they came to a man named Bar Bochin. As they approached his house, they overheard a conversation between him and his son.

"What have we to eat today?" asked the son.

"Endives," replied the father.

Believing the family to be very poor, since they had to content themselves with so humble a repast, the rabbis hesitated to approach Bar Bochin and continued on their way into the town, still considering the advisability of returning.

Finally they did return and asked for a contribution. He bade them go to his wife and request her in his name to give them a measure of denarii. They did so, and when the wife asked, "Shall it be level or heaping?" they replied that her husband had not specified.

"Then I shall make it a heaping measure," said the wife, "and if my husband raises any objections, tell him whatever is over and above the level measure I will repay from my own portion."

The rabbis returned to Bar Bochin to thank him for his gift. The donor wished to know whether they had received a level or a heaping measure, and expressed his pleasure when they told him. "Why did you not come sooner?" he asked them.

They then related the cause of their reluctance. "It is true that we live humbly," said Bar Bochin, "but that leaves more to give to the poor, as God has commanded."

CHARITY REWARDED

Once, when Rabbi Akiba was a passenger at sea, he witnessed the sinking of a vessel not far away. It grieved him greatly, especially as he knew that there was on board a learned man with whom he was well acquainted.

Not many weeks later, in the streets of Cappadocia, the rabbi, to his great joy, met the man he believed had been drowned. The rabbi greeted him heartily and listened with pleasure to the account of his rescue.

In answer to the inquiry as to what had been his last act before boarding the vessel, the man said, "As I was making my way down to the ship, a poor man approached me, asking for alms. I gave him a loaf of bread, for which he thanked me with the words, 'As thou hast saved me from starvation, so mayest thou be saved when danger threatens thy life.' "

"Verily," said Rabbi Akiba, "here is the proverb exemplified, 'Cast thy bread upon the waters for thou shalt find it after many days.' "—*Ecclesiastes 11:1.*

MISERY CALLS FOR GOOD DEEDS

The wicked Turnus Rufus said to Rabbi Akiba, "If, as you say, your God is a friend to the poor and helpless, why does He not aid them?"

"God permits mankind to do these deeds so that, by practicing charity, we may be deserving of reward, and thus show proper repentance for our sins," answered the rabbi.

"Verily, a fine reward! Listen, while I cite an instance. Suppose there were a prince who, enraged at a subject, had him imprisoned, with the strict command that no one should offer him food or drink. Suppose a daring person should attempt to disobey this decree, would the prince look upon this act as deserving of reward?"

"Your example is not an accurate one," answered the rabbi. "Listen, and I will offer a better one. Imagine that a prince, his wrath kindled against his own son, orders him cast into prison, forbidding any one to offer him meat or drink. Suppose that a compassionate soul takes pity upon the prisoner, brings him food and thus saves his life. Would not the prince, far from being angry at such an act, rather reward the well-disposed helper who saved his son from death? For we are, indeed, all the children of God."

¶ ¶

OSTENTATIOUS CHARITY

Rabbi Yannai, seeing a man give alms in public, said to him, "It were better to give nothing than to give in the presence of others and thus humiliate the recipient."

STEWARDSHIP WORTHILY FULFILLED

A certain pious and charitable man had suffered reverses and was forced to work as a day laborer. One day, as he was wearily driving his plough in a field, an Arabian approached him, saying, "My friend, thou art destined to live for six years in affluence. Choose in which period of thy life thou wouldst enjoy these six years, now or later."

"Art thou a magician?" asked the man, in astonishment. "Go thy way, for I can not bargain with thee." And he continued his labors.

Shortly after, the Arabian came again and repeated his offer, but it was again rejected. He appeared a third time, and the man, partly convinced by the stranger's persistence, answered, "I will speak with my wife of thy proposal and thou shalt hear of our decision."

Thereupon he related the conversation to his wife and concluded with these words, "Granted that he speaketh the truth, when should we choose the six years of prosperity, now or in our old age?"

"At once!" cried the wife, and the man hurried to tell the Arabian of the decision.

"Be it so!" said the stranger. "Go home and thou wilt find my promise fulfilled."

In the meantime, the sons of the couple, in the act of digging the soil, discovered shining particles which proved to be gold. The deeper they dug the more gold they discovered. They cried aloud in their joy,

and mother and father came running to ascertain the cause of their rejoicing.

The good mother was too sensible to allow the sudden acquisition of riches to change her simple habits. She at once determined to make the best possible use of it.

"We have six years in which to enjoy our prosperity," said she. "Let us share our good fortune with the poor."

Each day that passed was spent in good deeds and in acts of charity. The wise woman instructed her youngest son to keep an account of the daily alms giving.

When the six years has passed, the Arabian, who was none other than the prophet Elijah, appeared again and said, "My friend, the six years are at an end. Return my riches to me."

"Thou hast spoken truly," answered the man. "But wait! I did not act until my wife had given her counsel, and I must consult her before restoring thy treasures."

They both entered the house, and the wife, without delay, rendered an account of her good deeds, saying, "Good friend, if thou thinkest that thy gold were better in the hands of another, take it back. But if thou believest that we are true stewards of thy wealth, leave it in our hands."

And the prophet permitted them to retain it.

THE NOBLEST SACRIFICE

A man named Abba Judan was noted for his liberality to the poor. But he was unfortunate enough to lose most of his possessions, and when, one day, a collection was taken for the needy, he was troubled because he had nothing to contribute.

His wife, seeing him downcast, asked him the reason. When he confided to her the cause of his distress, the good woman, who was as tenderhearted as he, said to him, "We have nothing left but one field; go and sell half of it, and give the proceeds as your contribution."

He did so, and the rabbis who accepted the money in behalf of the poor blessed the giver and prayed that his former prosperity be restored to him.

After a time, Abba Judan went out to plow the portion of the field remaining to him. It chanced that the ox that was drawing the plow stumbled and fell into a hollow in the ground. As he stooped over to help the animal get up, his eyes beheld the gleam of gold in the hollow, and, to his great astonishment, a wonderful treasure was revealed.

Abba Judan was now enabled to regain his former prosperity, and when the rabbis again visited the town on their charitable mission the good man went out to meet them, saying, "Your prayers have borne good fruit," and told them the story of his restored fortunes.

"As thou livest," said they, "although others were enabled to give a greater sum than thou, we wrote thy name above all the rest, since thy kind heart found a way to make a noble sacrifice in order to give to those in greater need than thyself."

KNOWLEDGE REDEEMS

While Rabbi Joshua was in Rome, he heard that a Jewish lad was held as a slave there and was being ill-treated by his master. The rabbi's heart was filled with compassion for the unfortunate child, and he determined to investigate the matter. He succeeded in finding the lad, who was of unusual beauty and charm. The words of the Prophet Isaiah rose to the lips of the rabbi and he repeated them:

" 'Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers?' "

The boy, without a moment's hesitation, answered in the prophet's words, " 'Did not the Lord? He against Whom we have sinned, for we would not walk in His ways, neither were we obedient unto His Law.' "

The rabbi interpreted the ready answer as a happy prophecy of the lad's future. Since he had the means to redeem him, the good rabbi paid a large sum for this purpose, and the boy became a great teacher in Israel, the famous Rabbi Ishmael.

FORGIVENESS

GOD HATES THE SIN, NOT THE SINNER

There lived near the home of Rabbi Meir a number of base men who constantly annoyed and harassed the good rabbi. Weary of the interminable persecutions, and contrary to his customary gentleness, he one day wrathfully prayed for the death of his persecutors.

While he was thus engaged, the rabbi's good wife entered the room. Observing her husband's agitated manner, and hearing his unaccustomed words, she sternly said to him, "Thy prayer is contrary to the Divine command. God desireth not the destruction of sinners, but of their sins. Pray for their redemption, not for their death."

¶ ¶

JUDGE NOT BY APPEARANCES

Joshua ben Chananiah, famed for his great learning, was exceedingly homely. One day, the daughter of the Emperor Trajan, meeting the rabbi on the street, cried out, "What an ugly vessel to contain so much wisdom!"

The rabbi, without taking offense at so rude a speech, began to converse with the princess. "Pray tell me," said he, "in what kind of vessels do you keep your wine?"

"In earthern ones, to be sure," replied the princess.

"In earthen vessels! They are too common for an imperial household. Let your wine be preserved in vessels of silver or of gold."

Following his advice the princess had the wine

transferred to vessels of precious metals. But in a short time the wine turned sour. The emperor, being told of the circumstance, sent for his daughter, and learning who had offered the advice, bade Rabbi Joshua appear before him.

"What strange thing is this which you have told my daughter?" demanded the emperor.

"Sir, I but desired to administer a wholesome lesson. Your daughter seems to judge by outward appearances only, and spoke contemptuously of my homely face and figure. I wished to impress upon her the fact that, just as wine keeps best in mean vessels, even so it is with wisdom."

¶ ¶

AARON AS PEACEMAKER

Aaron was a great lover of peace. If two men had a quarrel, Aaron would go to one of them and would say, "My son! Hear what thy neighbor says. He rends his garments, crying, 'Woe is me! How can I raise my eyes and look upon my neighbor? I am ashamed because I began the quarrel'."

Then Aaron would sit with him until he had removed every trace of anger and bitterness from his heart.

Aaron would then go to the other and would say to him, "My son! Hear what thy neighbor says. He rends his garments, crying, 'Woe is me! How can I raise my eyes and look upon my neighbor? I am ashamed because I began the quarrel'." Aaron would sit with him also until the passion of anger passed away.

When the two met they would embrace and kiss each other, and peace and friendship would again rule their hearts.

FORBEARANCE

A LESSON IN FORBEARANCE

"The patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit." ***—Ecclesiastes 7:8.***

A Persian approached a certain rabbi with the request that the latter teach him the Hebrew language.

The rabbi began: "This letter is Aleph."

"Who says so?"

The rabbi continued: "This is Beth."

"Who says so?"

The rabbi flew into a rage and harshly dismissed the would-be pupil. The intractable Persian made his way to Rabbi Samuel with the same request.

"This is Aleph," began the teacher.

"Who says this letter is so called?"

The rabbi continued: "This is Beth." Again the pupil made the same objection.

The teacher touched the Persian's ear, saying, "What is this?"

"This is my ear," he answered.

"Who told you it is your ear?"

"Why, everyone knows that!"

"And so does everyone know that this letter is Aleph and that is Beth!"

The Persian was silent and accepted the instruction without further comment.

Solomon's proverb is thus proved, for the patience of Rabbi Samuel produced results which the irascibility of the other rabbi would never have accomplished.

A WITTY RETORT

A man from Athens found a broken mortar in the streets of Jerusalem. Taking it up, he carried it to the shop of a tailor, saying, "I pray you sew these fragments together."

The tailor gathered up a handful of sand and replied, "I will do so as soon as you make me a thread of this material with which to repair the fragments."

SYMPATHY

SYMPATHY ALLEVIATES SUFFERING

Rabbi Jochanan had lain ill for many months. One day Rabbi Chanina visited him and offered his sympathy. "How is it with thee?" he asked

"My pain is greater than I can bear," replied the sick man.

"Say not so; say rather that God is good and will ease thy suffering."

Many times did he visit his suffering friend, encouraging him with words of cheer. Rabbi Jochanan took heart, bore his pain with fortitude, and ceased repining, murmuring, "God is good." In the course of time he recovered his health.

Not long after, it chanced that Rabbi Chanina fell ill and his friend visited him. The sick man was greatly depressed and complained of his sufferings.

"The words of encouragement which thou didst offer me," said Rabbi Jochanan, "should cheer thy heart also."

"Alas, when I was free from pain I could be a source of help to those who needed it," answered Rabbi Chanina, "but now I require aid from others. Thou knowest it has been said, 'A prisoner can not free himself from his chains!' "

WHAT IS MOST DESIRABLE IN LIFE

A teacher asked his pupils to express their opinion to what was most desirable in this life.

One declared for moderation in all things; another believed that a faithful friend was the most precious of possessions; a third thought that a good neighbor was most to be desired; another, that the hope of a future life was the best of all.

The fifth believed that a good heart was more to be desired than all else. The master agreed with this opinion, for a good heart includes every quality which is most desirable in man.

SERVICE

THE PILLARS OF THE WORLD

The world rests upon three things: upon the Torah, upon Divine worship, and upon the service of loving kindness. It is written: "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night."—*Joshua 1:8.*

Of Divine worship it is written: "The prayer of the upright is His delight."—*Proverbs 15:8.*

Of loving kindness it is said: "For I desire mercy, and not sacrifice."—*Hosea 6:6.*

¶ ¶

LOVINGKINDNESS THE MARK OF HUMANITY

On the day when Adam was created, God said to His ministering angels, "Come, let us descend and render loving service to the first man and to his helpmate, for the world depends upon lovingkindness. More beloved and precious is lovingkindness than the sacrifices and burnt-offerings which Israel will bring unto Me in the future."

And God blessed our first parents while His angels watched over them.

THE POOR WOMAN'S SACRIFICE

A poor woman brought a handful of meal for a sacrifice, which an unworthy priest accepted in a contemptuous manner. "What an offering is this!"

he said. "What shall be used for the sacrifice and what remains for the priest?"

But a voice rebuked him with these words: "Thou dost a great wrong to scorn this poor woman, who hath nothing but a handful of meal to give. Look rather upon such a gift as though she had offered up her own body as a sacrifice to the Eternal."

¶ ¶

FRIENDS THE RICHEST BLESSING

A certain rich man who had ten sons took a solemn oath that, on the day of his death, he would bequeath to each of them a hundred denarii. As time went on, he lost some of his money and had but nine hundred

and fifty gold pieces remaining. He gave the nine hundred to nine of his sons.

The youngest said to him, "My father, how canst thou leave me penniless?"

The father answered, "Of the fifty remaining denarii, I have taken thirty with which to buy my shroud. The remaining twenty shall be thine. However, I have ten dear friends. These I bequeath to you; they are worth more than a thousand gold pieces."

Shortly after, the father died. Each of the nine sons received his inheritance and went his way. The youngest son remained at home and was compelled to spend the sum which had been left to him, so that he had but a single gold piece left. He thought to himself, "Of what profit are the friends my father bequeathed to me? How can it be that they are worth more than a thousand denarii?" He concluded, however, to invite them to his home, and spent the remaining gold piece to buy food for their entertainment.

They ate and drank together and said, one to the other, "See, this lad has more regard for his father's friends than all his brothers. It is equally our duty to show our friendship towards him." As they were about to depart, each gave him a goodly sum of money wherewith he bought land and cattle. The Lord blessed his endeavors and he became even more prosperous than his father had been. He thought to himself, "My father spoke truly when he said that friends are more precious than all the riches of the world."

GOD RAISETH THE POOR FROM THE DUST

A man of great wealth one day was thinking over his actions during his lifetime, and said to himself very despondently, "Of what use is this money which I have amassed? When death comes, how shall it profit me?"

After due reflection, he decided to spend his gold on charity and good deeds in order that he might prepare a way to the future world. He swore solemnly to bestow alms only upon such as had lost all hope in this world.

One day, he encountered a poor man sitting by the roadside, clad in miserable rags. The rich man thought, "Truly, here is one who has lost faith in the world and would welcome death because he is weary of this life." Thereupon he gave the poor man a hundred gold pieces.

The recipient, amazed at so liberal a gift, said, "Why do you give me this princely sum instead of dividing it among the many needy ones of the town?"

"Because," replied the donor, "I have sworn to give alms only to those who have lost faith in this world and have sunk to the depths of despair."

"Take back your gold, fool that you are!" exclaimed the poor man. "It is you who have lost faith. As for me, I trust in the goodness of the Eternal and in His mercy. Has it not been said, 'He raiseth the poor out of the dust?' Do you not know that the Eternal can deliver me from need and bestow riches upon me if such be His will? Know that this is the truth, and forsake your folly."

The rich man replied, "In return for my desire to render you help, you heap scorn and rebuke upon me."

"You meant well, perhaps," answered the other, "but in reality you would have killed me, for only the dead despair of the good of life."

The rich man thought, "If that be so, I will bury this gold in the graves of the dead." He did so.

It came to pass, not long after, that the rich man lost his possessions. Since want had overtaken him, he made his way one day to the graveyard, where he had buried the gold, in order that he might use it for the necessities of life. As he was about to dig up the treasure, the watchman seized him and hurried him to the chief magistrate of the town. Who should he be but the poor man who, since he belonged to a noble family, had been chosen as successor to the late magistrate.

Said the watchman, "Sir, we found this man about to rob the dead in their graves."

The chief magistrate recognized the prisoner, but pretended to regard him as a stranger and spoke harshly to him, censuring him for his wickedness.

The accused disavowed any intended wrong and disclosed the whole story.

Then the magistrate said, "It is evident that you do not know me. I am the poor wretch whom you met on the roadside and offered to help, thinking that I was sunk in the depths of despair." He rose up and embraced the bewildered listener, and ordered that the buried gold be restored to him. Furthermore, he made it known that the stranger should henceforth be an honored guest in his house.

Truly has it been said, "He raiseth the poor out of the dust."

WEALTH A TRUST

A king, who distributed his fortune among the poor and unfortunate, was reproached by his brothers for scattering broadcast that which his father had accumulated. He replied, "My father amassed wealth for this world; I expend it in charitable deeds, the results of which can be seen in this life, while the reward will come in the hereafter. My father gathered for this world; I gather for the world to come."

¶ ¶

MERCY SURPASSES EVERYTHING

Abba Techina, the pious, one Sabbath Eve, was on his way home, carrying a load upon his shoulders. On the roadside sat a poor man, too weak to continue his way to the town. "Pray support me so that I may reach my home," begged the sick man.

The good Abba thought, "If I leave my load here, while I help this poor man, where shall I get something to eat for my wife and children? And yet, if I allow this sufferer to remain here without help. I shall be committing a sin."

The nobler impulse prevailed, however; he supported the sick man to his home in the town, and trudged back to recover his load. It was twilight before he reached the town again, and all who saw him were amazed to find the pious Abba Techina bearing a burden on the Sabbath.

He thought to himself, "Have I desecrated the Sabbath? Perhaps what I did was not deserving of praise." But a voice sounded in his ears: "Go, eat thy bread in joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God hath witnessed thy deed and reward shall be thine!"

THE GLORY OF SERVICE

In order to celebrate the marriage feast of his son, Rabbi Gamaliel invited three of his learned friends, Eliezer, Joshua, and Zadok.

As the guests were seated at table, Gamaliel went about for the purpose of serving his friends with wine.

Rabbi Eliezer, abashed at the thought of being waited upon by so great a man, declined to accept anything.

Rabbi Joshua, on the other hand, accepted the wine and began to drink. Eliezer, astonished, said hesitatingly, "My friend, how canst thou permit so great a man to serve thee?"

"To serve me? What matter, if it please him? Great though he is, he is yet human. There are instances in Holy Scriptures where the greatest humbled themselves to perform tasks. Are we not told that Abraham himself served the three guests who ate at his table? Nor did he know that they were angels."

Here Rabbi Zadok interrupted, saying, "My friends, you would seek examples of humility, goodness, and foresight. Instead of referring to human example, seek comparison with the acts of God Himself. It is He who causeth the breezes to blow; it is He who gathereth the clouds which moisten the earth; it is He who maketh the fields to produce a plentiful harvest. What are the labors of mankind when compared with the unending service of God?"

BENEFITS NOT FORGOTTEN

As Bar Kappara was walking along the harbor at Caesarea, he witnessed the sinking of a ship. One of the survivors, the proconsul of the city, succeeded in

swimming to the shore, where Bar Kappara rendered him assistance. He took him to his own home, and supplied him with food and clothing, together with six selaim, since the proconsul's possessions had all gone down with the ship.

Some time after, the Jews of Caesarea were threatened with imprisonment by order of the court. They took counsel with one another, in great anxiety as to what measures to undertake. Then one suggested that Kappara, who was held in respect by the administration, make an appeal to the governing powers. They gave him 500 denarii with which to plead their cause.

When Bar Kappara appeared at the court, he was recognized by the proconsul, who greeted him heartily

and inquired about his errand. "I am here to plead for the Jews of Caesarea," said Bar Kappara.

"Do you not know that nothing can be accomplished without money?"

"I have here five hundred denarii; pray take them and intercede for us."

"Keep the money as security for the five selaim which you advanced me," said the proconsul. "Because you gave me food and drink when I was in distress, your people shall be saved. Go in peace."

JUSTICE

THE POWER OF JUSTICE

Rabbi Simeon ben Gamaliel said, "Do not disparage the power of justice, for it is one of the three pillars of the world. Our sages taught that the world rests upon Justice, Truth, and Peace. Consider, then, that when thou dost assail justice, thou dost wreck the world, for justice is one of its supports. Great is its power, for "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Thy throne."—*Psalms 89:15.*

¶ ¶

THREE ENNOBLING VIRTUES

The pupils of Rabbi Nechunya asked him, "What virtues did you practice most frequently in order to prolong your days?"

The master replied, "I never belittled my companions in order to heighten my own importance; I refrained from bearing malice when an injury was done me; and I endeavored to be liberal with my possessions."

"The first virtue I learned from a wise teacher who was returning one evening with a hoe over his shoulder. A friend of his wished to relieve him of his burden, but he refused, saying, 'If you are accustomed to carry farm implements, I will accept your offer, but if such is not your habit, I refuse to profit by your humiliation.'

"The second virtue I learned from my friend Mar Sutra, who was in the habit of praying every night, 'O God, forgive all those who have done evil towards me.'

"The third virtue I learned from Job, who, in place of paying the wages agreed upon to those he employed, of his own free will increased the amount."

WRONGDOING NEVER EXCUSABLE

Rab Huna, who was at one time very rich, lost most of his possessions and was reduced almost to poverty.

One day, as he was discussing his affairs with a number of his colleagues, the question arose as to whether misfortune were punishment meted out to man for his sins. The visitors declared with one voice that misfortune was always caused by wrongdoing on the part of man.

Rab Huna was displeased with this conclusion, since it seemed a reflection upon his character, and he said, "So you think I am guilty of a sin? Tell me frankly and I will try to retrieve my error."

One of his colleagues replied, "As far as we know, you have always acted uprightly. But we have heard it said that during the wine harvest you did not give your servant the portion allowed him according to law."

"You think I did not give him his portion!" laughed the host. "Do you doubt that he steals from me far more than what I am required to give him?"

"And because you suspect your servant of stealing, you in turn steal from him? Whoever takes from a thief is himself no better than a thief."

THE FAR REACHING EFFECTS OF SLANDER

Rabbi Samuel ben Nachman relates the following: "A man asked a serpent, 'Why is it that a bite from thee in one member of the body causeth the poison to penetrate into every part?'

"The serpent replied, 'Ask that question of the slanderer. He speaketh here and causeth death in Rome, or if he speaketh in Rome, his words may cause death here, or even at the end of the world!'"

¶ ¶

THE TEST OF THE RIGHTEOUS

"The Lord trieth the righteous, but the wicked and him that loveth violence His soul hateth."—Psalm 11:5.

Rabbi Jonathan said, "The potter tests not the porous vessels which break when he taps them, but rather the perfect specimens, for however sharply he may strike them, they do not break. Thus God tries the righteous, but not the sinners. The flax dealer, knowing that his flax is good, beats it again and again, for the oftener it is struck the better and stronger it becomes, whereas the fibres of the weak stalks fall to pieces at the first stroke."

RECOGNIZING JUST CLAIMS

In the time of Alexander the Great, the Ethiopians made a strenuous claim for the possession of the Holy Land. They appeared before the emperor and argued this in favor of their demands: "Palestine, now occupied by the Israelites, was taken from us by force and belongs to us. Their very Book of the Law gives proof of the justice of our claims, for there it is plainly stated that the land once belonged to our ancestor Canaan."

Alexander decreed that the Israelites should state their side of the matter.

The Israelites met in council and various opinions were considered. Among other speakers a little hunchback came forward, and offered to appear before the judge in order to substantiate the claims of his people.

"Listen, friends," urged the little man, "you risk nothing by sending me. Should I lose, they will lay the blame upon the insignificance of your counsel; should I win, the victory will be ascribed to the power of the Law."

The trial began. The hunchback bravely took his stand before the judges. Turning to his opponents, he said, "Upon what documents do you base your claims?"

"What document? Your Law, to be sure. According to it, Palestine is our original home."

"Very good! You are willing to rely upon that document? I will follow your example. If it be just and right for you, so shall it be for us. The Law explains that God cursed Canaan, the son of Ham, and decreed that he should be a servant unto his brothers.

How is it possible that you, the descendants of slaves, should lay claim to our land? But that is not all. Though you are our slaves, you have never served us. Now we beg of our Emperor that he command you to render to us the equivalent of that long neglected service."

The opponents were silent, and, unable to refute the argument, took their departure.

Upon another occasion, the Israelites were forced to defend themselves against the Egyptians. The latter appeared before Alexander and related to him how the Israelites, in their flight from Egypt, had carried great treasures away with them. They, the Egyptians, demanded compensation.

Again the hunchback appeared to defend his people. He said, "Great emperor, I do not deny their claims. They demand compensation and they shall have it. But, you, great emperor, will render a just decision. According to the sacred document, upon which the claim is made, it is stated that our forefathers, six hundred thousand in number, served the Egyptians as slaves for four hundred years without receiving any pay. We are willing to relinquish the demanded treasures provided our opponents will compensate us for the services of our six hundred thousand ancestors during a period of four hundred years."

Silenced by this argument, the Egyptians fled.

DAVID AS JUDGE

In the days of King Saul there lived a rich young widow who was sought in marriage by a prince. But the woman disliked the suitor and, in order to escape his importunities, decided to leave the city. She filled a number of jugs with gold pieces, poured honey on the top to hide the gold, and in the presence of witnesses entrusted the jugs to the care of a friend of her deceased husband.

After a time the prince died, and the young woman, hearing of this, decided to return to her home.

The man to whom she had entrusted her fortune had need of honey for the celebration of his son's wedding feast. Finding the jugs full of honey, as he supposed, he took some of it, but beneath the surface he discovered the gold pieces. He emptied the jugs, took the money, and refilled them entirely with honey.

When the woman returned to the city, she at once went in search of the man and requested that the jugs be returned to her.

"Pray bring me the witnesses," said he, "and thou shalt have thy property."

The woman did as the man had advised, and the jugs were given back to her.

In the course of time, she discovered that the gold had been stolen, and she wept and lamented. She

appealed to the judges of the city but, since there were no witnesses to prove that there had been gold in the jugs, nothing could be done.

Upon the advice of the judges, she appeared before King Saul himself and he in turn sent her to the Sanhedrin, but all in vain, for without witnesses the man could not be proved guilty.

Sad at heart, she prepared to return to her home. On her way she met David, the shepherd boy, who was tending his sheep in a field near by. Addressing him, she begged him to render her help in obtaining justice.

The lad said, "Go to the king, and ask that I be permitted to help thee gain redress."

Saul granted permission, and the wrongdoer as well as the widow were ordered to appear before Saul.

"Art thou sure that these jugs are the same which thou gavest the accused for safe-keeping?" asked David.

The woman declared that this was so and the man assented.

David ordered that empty jugs be brought. He then poured the honey into the new receptacles, and, in the presence of the people assembled, broke the old jugs into pieces. Upon examining the fragments, he found among them two gold pieces which had adhered to the sides of the jugs. Turning to the man in whose keeping they had been placed, he said, "Go and bring to this woman the gold thou hast stolen."

When Saul and his court heard the judgment of David, they wondered and saw that the spirit of God rested upon him.

JUSTICE THE PERSONAL EQUATION

A man was brought before a judge on a certain charge and acquitted after the judge had considered the case. The man left with great satisfaction, and to every one he met he exclaimed, "That man is a wonderful judge!" There is not another in the world who is his equal in administering justice!"

After a time, the man again appeared before the judge who, after hearing the case which was to be decided, declared him guilty. Now that sentence was pronounced against him, he cried, "The judge is a fool! He knows what not he does!"

Those who had heard both expressions of opinion asked, "How is it that only a short time ago you could not find words enough to praise him, while today you call him a fool?"

RESPECT FOR REAL WORTH

THE AUTHORITY OF THE DEAD OFT SURPASSES THAT OF THE LIVING

The wicked Emperor Hadrian thus addressed Rabbi Joshua ben Chanina: "Am I not better than thy teacher Moses?"

"Why?"

"Because I am living and he is dead. Thou hast heard it said, 'Better a living dog than a dead lion.' "

"Is it in thy power," asked the rabbi, "to forbid the use of fire for three days?"

"Certainly," replied Hadrian, and he straightway issued a command to that effect.

At night the two went up to the roof of the palace whence the rabbi perceived smoke arising in the distance.

"What is that?" he inquired.

"The eparch is lying ill and the physician in attendance has explained that the man will die unless he gets hot water to drink."

"Behold!" exclaimed the rabbi, "while thou art yet living thy orders are disregarded. Moses has been dead these many years and his injunction forbidding the kindling of fire on the Sabbath has been kept by every Jew from that day to this. Dost thou still contend that thou art greater than he?"

¶ ¶

RESPECT FOR AUTHORITY

Before science had developed the present calendar, the holy days and festivals were determined by ob-

serving the phases of the moon. Upon one occasion, several witnesses appeared before Gamaliel, the president of the Sanhedrin, saying that they had observed the new moon in the heavens. Gamaliel accepted their statement and upon it he based the reckoning of the holy days. Rabbi Joshua, on the contrary, was of the opinion that the statement was false and he openly expressed his doubts.

The president's wrath was aroused at this denial, and he sent the following message to Rabbi Joshua: "I command you to appear before me with your stick and your money on the day on which, according to your calculation, the Day of Atonement falls."

The poor rabbi was grieved to think that he was to be forced to desecrate a day which, to his best belief, was a holy day. One day, however, he met Rabbi Akiba, who said to him:

"Your conscience need not reproach you. The religious tribunal is responsible for the appointment of festivals. Whatever be the decision of that body will be acceptable to God. Every epoch has its own religious tribunal, and the decision of each is entitled to the same respect as that accorded the most revered judges of a previous era. Every believer must abide by the decisions of whatever court prevails in his time."

Rabbi Joshua, pacified by these words, appeared before the president on the designated day, as on any work day, with his stick and his money, although in his opinion it was the Day of Atonement.

Rabbi Gamaliel hastened to meet him, kissed him upon the forehead and said, "Come to my heart, O my master and pupil; master in wisdom and pupil in obedience!"

THE HONORED OF GOD

The Emperor Hadrian, while walking in the streets of Tiberias, observed an old man digging a trench in which to set out some fig trees.

"Old man," said he, "it is time to rest from your day's labor."

"I work early and late, and whatever the Lord has assigned to me that will I do," answered the venerable laborer.

"How old are you?" questioned Hadrian.

"One hundred years," was the reply.

"Is it possible that you, at such an advanced age, think it worth while to plant trees? Do you suppose that you will live long enough to eat the fruit thereof?"

"Perhaps I may be spared to do so; if not, then, as my parents labored for me, so do I labor for my descendants," replied the old man.

"If you are fortunate enough to live to eat the fruit," continued the emperor, "let me know."

In the course of time the trees bore fruit. Remembering the emperor's desire, the old man filled a basket with figs and carried it to the palace. He was permitted to appear before Hadrian, to whom he related the incident, reminding the emperor of his wish to see the old worker should he be so fortunate as to live until the trees he planted should bear fruit. Hadrian ordered the basket to be filled with gold coins and returned to the donor.

"Why do you shower such gifts upon a poor Jew?" asked his steward.

"Since his Creator honors him," replied the emperor, "why should not I likewise show him my regard?"

A FORGIVING HUSBAND

Rabbi Jose was unfortunate in having a shrewish wife whose bad temper caused him many bitter hours. She heaped indignities upon him even in the presence of his pupils who, angered at the repeated insults their master had to endure, urged him to divorce the evil-tempered woman.

The poor rabbi tried to find excuses for his wife's bad conduct. Besides, she had brought him a rich dowry and the rabbi was poor, and according to the Law, it was his duty to relinquish the dowry should he seek a divorce.

The pupils, determined that their master should be persecuted no longer, collected a sum of money in payment of the dowry and begged their master to divorce his undutiful wife.

The woman accepted the decree with utter indifference and in a short time married the court-crier of the town.

It happened some time after that the man lost his occupation and, in addition to his other misfortunes, was stricken with blindness. Reduced to extreme poverty, he was forced to ask alms of the passers-by, led by his unhappy wife, whose duty it was to guide him from street to street.

The blind man one day bade his wife lead him to the part of the town where, he remembered, many Israelites lived, for he knew he would receive liberal alms from them.

The woman, unwilling to humiliate herself by appearing where she was likely to encounter her

former husband, refused to do as she was bidden. In the course of one of their daily rounds, the man became aware that they had come to a street not far distant

from the section which he desired to visit. Raising his voice, he stormed and threatened, demanding to be led thither. After repeated refusals on the part of his wife, he attacked her and beat her unmercifully.

Among those who ran to the scene of the uproar was Rabbi Jose. He recognized the woman as his former wife and his heart was stirred to pity by her present humiliation. His magnanimous nature caused him to forget her past offenses, and his one thought was to relieve her misery. He provided a shelter for the unfortunate pair, and maintained them out of his own meagre income for the remainder of their lives.

PARENTAL CARE

A LEGACY STRANGELY SAFEGUARDED

A very wealthy merchant, while traveling in a distant land, suddenly fell ill. Fearing that he was at death's door, he determined to settle his earthly affairs. He had taken his treasures with him, together with one of his slaves. At home, in his native land, he had left an only son whom he loved devotedly. Calling the slave to his bedside, the master informed him that he was to inherit his entire fortune on condition that the son should have the right to choose a single object, whatever it might be, as his inheritance.

The slave, well pleased with his dying master's will, carefully guarded the treasures. Upon his return he related what had happened and invited the son to select whatever object he most desired.

The young man, who deeply mourned his father's death, was unable to imagine why he should have been disinherited. Finally he decided to ask the opinion of a rabbi. The rabbi offered the following explanation: "My son, your wise father, with remarkable foresight, has kept your fortune intact. Had he named you his heir, the unfaithful slave would have appropriated it. As it is, he made the slave heir, and the slave, believing that the inheritance is his, has guarded it carefully. It was your father's wish that you should choose one object from among his possessions. He wanted you to choose the slave, for in that way you will become the possessor of your father's entire fortune."

HARSHNESS MISUNDERSTOOD

When the daughter of Rabban Gamaliel was about to be married, she said to him, "Father, I pray you, give me your blessing."

"May you never," he replied. "return to the home of your parents."

When her son was born, she said, "Father, pray for me."

He answered, "May your lips never cease to cry, 'Woe is me!' "

"Father, on two joyous occasions instead of blessing me you pronounced a curse!"

"On the contrary," replied the rabbi, "I have pronounced two sincere wishes: the first, that you may never return to your parental abode, implies the hope that your married life will be so happy that the thought of returning will never occur to you. The other wish, may you always cry 'woe!' means that your son will live in health and strength. Thus you may cry 'Woe! he has not eaten! Woe! he has not drunk! Woe! he has not gone to the school today!' "

¶ ¶

CHILDREN ARE THE GLORY OF THEIR FATHERS

A traveler set forth on a journey. Day after day he continued his lonely way without meeting a living creature, not seeing even a tree or a spring. After trudging along for ten weary days, he at last espied a tree in the distance. "Perhaps", thought he, "I may find water near by."

Upon approaching the long-sought tree, he discovered a spring underneath it. He sat down in the grateful shadow of the tree, ate of its fruit and enjoyed the cool shade under the spreading branches. When he had refreshed himself and was about to resume his journey, he thus addressed the tree, "How can I bless thee sufficiently for thy kindly hospitality? Thou hast a sturdy trunk, broad spreading branches, excellent fruit, and a favorable situation. It were useless to wish thee the blessings thou already hast. I can but express the hope that the shoots thou sendest forth from thy roots will grow and flourish equally."

FILIAL PIETY

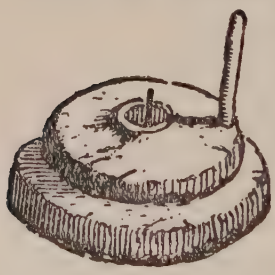
LOVE THE BASIS OF FILIAL DUTY

According to Rabbi Chanina, one man may provide his father with the best that the land offers and yet deserve the wrath of God, while another who sets his aged parent to work may inherit the blessings of Paradise.

A certain man placed before his father an excellent meal, including a fine and tender fowl. "My son," said the father, "where did you get this delicious fowl?"

"Eat, old man," was the churlish answer, "else it will be thrown to the dogs."

Although the father was supported in physical comfort, the son deserved the punishment meted out to the wicked.



Another man supported himself and his aged father by grinding grain at a mill.

One day the king's officers appeared in the village to exact a tax from the people. The son requested his father to take his place at the mill, saying: "It is safer for you to be thus occupied for the time being, lest the king's men insult and perhaps maltreat you. Let me confront them and thus shield you from danger."

Although the young man had set his old father to work, his act was one of filial piety and deserving of the blessings of Paradise.

FILIAL PIETY KNOWS NO PRICE

One day several priests journeyed to the home of Dama ben Nethina, in Ashkelon, in order to purchase a precious stone for the breastplate of the High Priest.

This stone was to replace a gem which had been lost. After the bargain had been concluded, Dama went into the adjoining room to bring the gem to the purchasers.

There he found his old father, who had fallen asleep, with one foot on the chest in which the jewels were kept. Unwilling to disturb the old man's slumber, he retired noiselessly from the room.

When he returned empty-handed, the would-be purchasers thought that he desired a greater price for the jewel, and offered him ten times the original sum.

When his father awoke from his sleep, Dama entered the room again and secured the stone.

The priests wished to pay him the ten thousand gold pieces, but he refused them, saying, "Far be it from me to accept that amount. I will not take advantage of my father's slumber. Give me the price we agreed upon at first and I shall be content."

HONOR THY FATHER AND THY MOTHER

The rabbis taught, "Man has three friends: God, his father, and his mother. As man honors and reverences his God. so ought he show the utmost regard for his parents.

When Rabbi Eleazar was asked how far honor towards parents should go, he replied, "Cast all thy wealth into the sea rather than cause trouble to thy father and thy mother."

Rabbi Simeon ben Jochai declared, "As the reward is great for those who honor their parents, so is the punishment equally great for those who neglect this precept."

"That thy days may be prolonged" refers not only to this life, but also to the world to come.

DUTIES TO ONE'S FELLOW MEN

NO ESCAPE FOR THE GUILTY

And the Lord said unto Cain, "Where is Abel thy brother?" —Genesis 4:9.

A man wandered into a garden, and plucked and ate mulberries which were growing there. The owner pursued him, saying, "What have you in your hand?"

"Nothing," replied the intruder.

Then said the owner, "This is no answer. See your hands are stained with the stolen fruit."

Thus spoke Cain to God, "I know not. Am I my brother's keeper?"

But God answered him, "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto Me from the ground."

¶ ¶

A MERCHANT AS JUDGE

Abba Chilkiah, who was a very rich man, was the judge of the town in which he lived. The force of circumstances caused him to lose his wealth until nothing remained to him but a small piece of ground, which he himself tilled.

His fellow-citizens, who had unbounded confidence in his wisdom and justice, begged him to retain his judgeship. The good man said, "Find someone to take care of my field, while I take charge of your affairs, and I will do as you wish."

And so the good man, who relinquished the tribunal to labor as a humble tiller of the soil, once more presided over a court of justice.

UNDERVALUING HUMAN LIFE

Nimrod said to his people, "Come, let us build a great city for ourselves, and let us dwell therein, lest we be scattered upon the face of the whole earth, as were the first people. Let us build a lofty tower ascending to heaven, and let us make a great name on the earth, for the Holy One has power only in the heavens.

They began to build, making bricks for the tower since there were no stones wherewith to build it. Thousands of laborers toiled and struggled in their eagerness to complete the huge tower, which, it is said, attained the height of seven miles. If a man fell and was killed, they paid no heed to him, but if a brick fell, they sat down and wept, saying," Woe unto us! when will another brick be put in its place?"

Then God called to the seventy angels, who surround the throne of His glory, and said to them, "Come, let us descend; let us confuse the seventy nations by changing their one language into seventy."

When the builders wished to speak to one another, they found that each spoke a strange language. Then each one took his sword and fought the other so that half the people of the world were slain. Then the Lord scattered them upon the face of the earth.

FAITH TRIUMPHANT

It is related that, in the war which the Amalekites waged against the Israelites, when Moses held up his

hands, Israel prevailed. That is, as long as the Israelites looked heavenward, submitting their hearts in willing obedience to their Father in Heaven, they prevailed, but when they failed to do so, they were defeated. When the hands of Moses grew heavy, they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat upon it. Moses would have no cushion to ease him, for, since Israel was in distress, he would not do otherwise than share their distress with them.

HONOR AND SHAME FROM NO CONDITION RISE

There once lived a learned and pious rabbi who prayed to God to reveal to him the identity of his companion in the future world. One night he dreamed that he heard the words, "Your comrade in the world to be is a butcher."

When he awoke he was greatly troubled, and fasted and prayed. In another dream he heard a voice say, "Why should you be grieved to have a butcher as your comrade? Do you know the greatness of his acts? His reward shall be great in Heaven."

The next day the rabbi went to the shop of the butcher of whom he had dreamed and said to him, "I beg you to tell me of your acts of charity."

The butcher replied, "I spend half of my income in good works, and the rest suffices for the needs of my family."

"That is nothing unusual," answered the rabbi. "Have you done anything else that is admirable?"

The butcher reflected for a moment and then said, "I recall something which occurred many years ago. One day there came to the town a company of gentiles, with a number of captives, among whom was a little girl who was weeping bitterly. I questioned her and she told me she was a Jewess and feared that her captors would sell her to non-Jews. For this reason she prayed that a Jew might redeem her. My heart was touched and I went to her captors and ransomed her for a large sum of money—more than I could afford. I took the child to my home, and when she was of the proper age I betrothed her to my only son. When the time for the wedding drew near, I gave her an ample dowry and invited every one in the town

to the wedding feast, rich and poor alike. All who partook of the feast were merry and glad—all but the guests at one table.

"When I saw that they took no part in the general rejoicing, I inquired the cause of their low spirits. They told me that one of the company, a young man, had been weeping and lamenting so continually that his strange actions had prevented them from sharing in the joyousness of the occasion. I took the young man aside and said, "What is it that troubles you? If you are in need I will give you money. Or, if you are in debt, I will lend you what you require."

He answered, "I am neither in need nor in debt. But I weep because your son is about to marry the girl who was to be my bride. She was taken captive and for years I searched for her in vain. See, here is the betrothal document."

"I saw that he was speaking the truth and bade him wait, assuring him that all would be well. I called my son and told him of my conversation with the stranger, stating that his prior rights had to be respected. Just as my son had obeyed my wish that he marry the girl, so he was equally willing to accede to my desire that he relinquish his right to her in favor of the stranger.

"The new bridegroom and bride were thereupon led to the wedding canopy and the ceremony was enacted. I bestowed upon the girl all that she would have

received had she married my son, and when, after several days, the couple left for their home in a distant town, I gave them rich gifts and my blessing for their future happiness."

When the butcher had finished his recital, the rabbi exclaimed, "May the Eternal shower His blessings upon you! I am indeed rejoiced that you are destined to be my companion in the world to come."

OBVERSE AND REVERSE

There are some who acquired great wisdom for their own happiness and for that of others, such as Moses and Solomon; wisdom was the undoing of such as Doeg and Achithophel.

Some, like David and Judah, acquired great strength, which they used in a good cause; the strength of others led but to their misfortune, as was the case with Samson and Goliath.

Some, like David and Solomon, acquired great riches which brought them happiness; others, like Korach and Haman, had wealth without happiness.

Some had many children who were the joy of their fathers, for example, Jacob and David; Ahab and Eli had many sons, who caused them naught but sorrow.

THE POWER OF THE TONGUE

Rabbi Simeon ben Gamaliel said to his servant, "Go to the market and buy me something good to eat."

The servant did as he was bidden, and bought a tongue.

Another time the rabbi said, "Go to the market and buy me something that is not good."

The servant went and returned with a tongue.

His master said to him, "What does this mean? When I told you to buy something that was good you brought a tongue."

The servant answered, "From the tongue issues the good and also the bad. There is nothing better than a good tongue, and nothing worse than an evil one."

The rabbi soon after invited his disciples to partake of a meal at which tongues both hard and soft were served. They selected the soft ones and allowed the others to remain untouched. Said the rabbi, "As you choose the soft tongues and reject those that are hard, so also use only a soft tongue in your intercourse with one another."

GOOD DEEDS SURPASS EVERYTHING

A man has three friends during his lifetime: his sons and household, his money, and his good deeds.

At the hour of a man's departure from the world, he gathers his sons and his household and says to them, "I beg of you, come and save me from the judgment of this evil, death."

They answer him, saying, "Hast thou not heard that there is no one who can prevail over the day of death?"

Then he has his money brought to him and says to it, "I beseech thee, save me from the judgment of this evil, death."

It answers him, saying, "Hast thou not heard, 'Riches profit not on the day of wrath?' "

Finally he calls for his good deeds and directs the same plea to them.

They answer him thus, "When thou goest, verily, we will go in advance of thee, as it is said, 'Charity delivereth from death!' "

FAITH IN MEN

LOYAL UNTO DEATH

There once lived two friends whose love for one another was of extraordinary tenderness. Their lives were bound up one in the other, but it chanced that they were forced to separate and take up their homes in two kingdoms that were at war.

It happened that one of the two visited the town in which his friend lived. When the news reached the ears of the king, the latter, believing that the stranger was a spy, ordered him to be put to death.

The accused fell at the king's feet and begged that a favor be granted him. When the king bade him speak, he said, "My lord king, when I left my home, I placed my possessions in trust, but failed to secure a document in proof of the transaction. Should I be put to death, my wife and children would be penniless. If you will permit me to place my affairs in order, I promise to return and meet my doom."

The king replied, "How do I know that you will keep your word?"

Thereupon the man's friend approached the king, saying, "My lord, I will pledge myself for him, remaining in prison until my friend's return, and if necessary, I will die for him."

The king thereupon granted permission for a month's absence.

On the last of the thirty days the king waited for the absent one to appear but he failed to come. At sunset the king commanded that the prisoner be put to death. The jailers led him to the market place and were about to behead him when a great noise was heard.

"See! the man comes!" cried the multitude.

In great haste the newcomer, who had been delayed in his journey by many unforseen obstacles, demanded to be put to death so that his friend might be freed. But the other was equally steadfast in his desire to spare the life of his friend.

When the king saw the marvelous love between the two friends, he ordered that the lives of both of them be spared and begged them to admit him into their friendship. The three remained staunch friends to the end of their lives.

¶ ¶

MEASURE FOR MEASURE

Those who judge others with leniency will themselves be so judged.

A poor peasant once left his home and engaged in the service of a rich land owner who lived some distance away. They came to terms regarding the wages, and the peasant worked for three years in the rich man's fields. During all this time his wages were not forthcoming, but so great was the peasant's confidence in the other's sense of justice that he never demanded his pay.

At the end of the three years the peasant said to the landowner, "It is now time for me to go back to my family. I pray you give me the money due me that I may return to my home."

"My good man," answered the rich master, "I have no money to give you."

"Then pay me in the grain which has been harvested."

"I have no more grain."

"Then in cattle."

"Nor have I any cattle."

"Give me a portion of land instead."

"I have no more land."

"Then give me your household effects."

"I have nothing more," sadly returned the other.

Without a word of reproach or indignation, the poor peasant gathered up his few belongings and returned to his home.

Several days later, the peasant was surprised to see his former employer approach bringing with him a number of vehicles filled with costly goods and produce. The good man received his guest cordially. While they were breaking bread together, the landowner remarked,

"My friend, when I told you I had no money, what did you think of me? What suspicions arose in your mind?"

"None at all. I thought you had no ready money because you had spent it on a good bargain."

"When I said I had no cattle, what did you think?"

"That you might have lent them out."

"And when I said I had no more crops, what did you suspect?"

"Nothing. I surmised that they had not yet been tithed."

"What did you think when I told you I had no more land?"

"That you had rented it."

"And finally," continued the visitor, "when I said that I had nothing, not even the most necessary household effects, was not your faith in my honesty shattered?"

"No, for I thought that you had dedicated it all to the service of God, and that therefore there was nothing left for me."

"By heaven! You have spoken the truth! In a moment of rage caused by the evil behavior of my son, I dedicated my entire possessions to the service of the Lord. The teachers of the Law have released me from my hasty pledge. Here is a rich reward for your labors. May God ever judge you as mercifully as you have judged me."

TRUST

ELIJAH'S PERPLEXING BLESSINGS

Rabbi Joshua ben Levi once prayed fervently that the Creator might let him gaze upon the face of Elijah. His prayer was answered, for behold, Elijah appeared before him, saying, "What wouldst thou have of me? Speak, and thy wish shall be granted."

Rabbi Joshua answered, "I long to go with thee and to learn wisdom from the greatness of thy deeds."

Elijah said, "Thou wilt not always understand the purport of my acts."

"My lord," returned Rabbi Joshua, "I will not trouble thee with questions. Let me but follow thee and I ask no more."

Elijah agreed to allow Joshua to accompany him provided the rabbi would refrain from asking the reason for the master's deeds.

The two went their way until they reached the house of a needy man, whose possessions consisted solely of a cow. As they drew near, the man and his wife, who sat at the door of the house, rose and went to meet the strangers. They welcomed them and offered the best of their scanty store, as well as lodging for the night.

When the two men were about to depart the next morning Elijah expressed a wish concerning the cow and the animal straightway died.

Rabbi Joshua was greatly perplexed and thought to himself, "These good people have given us the best

of their poor means and lo! we have now caused the death of their cow." He turned to Elijah and said, "My lord, why hast thou done this thing when these people have shown us honor?"

Elijah answered, "Remember the agreement between us,—unless thou dost refrain from asking questions, we must part."

Towards evening they reached the abode of a rich man. There they tarried, but the host offered them neither food nor drink.

A wall in the house had fallen and in the morning Elijah prayed and built up the wall. Then they resumed their journey.

Amazement and concern troubled the spirit of Rabbi Joshua, but he repressed the desire to ask an explanation.

At nightfall they arrived at a great synagog in which the seats were of silver and gold. But no one offered fitting hospitality to the strangers and they had to content themselves with the bread and water which was brought to them. There they remained until morning, when they prepared to go their way.

Elijah's parting words were, "May ye all become prominent officials of the synagog."

Rabbi Joshua could hardly contain his amazement.

After a day's travel they arrived in a town where they were met by a friendly company and conducted to the home of one of the nobles. Here they were shown the warmest hospitality. In the morning Elijah prayed, "May the Eternal permit but one to be the head of your assembly."

When Rabbi Joshua heard these words, he could no longer restrain his curiosity. "Tell me, I beg of you, the secret of thy acts."

Elijah answered, "Since we must part, I will explain all and tell thee the reason for my deeds. It had been decreed that the woman whose cow I caused to be killed should die. I prayed to God that the cow be taken as a ransom for the woman's life, for I saw that her skill and industry would bring prosperity to the household. The rich man, had I permitted him to have his wall rebuilt, would have become the possessor of a great treasure of gold and silver that lay buried beneath it. I, therefore, built it up and he knows nothing of the treasure. I prayed for many heads of the congregation in one community, since strife will ensue because of the numerous counselors. But I prayed for only one head in the other community, for peace and prosperity will thereby be their portion."

Continuing, Elijah said, "I give thee good counsel: if thou seest sinners prospering in their way, be not deceived, for misfortune will yet overtake them. And when thou seest the pious overwhelmed by care and sorrow, take heed lest thy heart lead thee astray and thou doubt the wisdom of the Creator, for His ways are just and all His decrees are for the good of man."

With these words, Elijah departed, and Rabbi Joshua went thoughtfully on his way.

WHAT GOD DOES IS WISELY DONE

It was the habit of Rabbi Akiba to accept with patience and fortitude any mishap or misfortune which befell him. Not only that, he never lost his implicit faith in God, believing that all was ordained for ultimate good.

"All is for the best" was his favorite expression, no matter what mischance occurred.

At one time Akiba was traveling in a distant land where he had neither friend nor acquaintance. As night was approaching, he hurried on to a nearby village, hoping there to find shelter. He inquired of the passersby where he might find a night's lodging; he knocked at many a door, but not a friendly word returned his greeting, and only churlish answers met his request for a night's shelter.

Not troubling himself over this inhospitable treatment, the traveler thought, "I must have patience; God does all things for the best. Since I can not remain here for the night, I will go on to the neighboring forest and make my bed there."

Thereupon he continued on his way with his donkey, his cock, and a lamp which he had brought with him to light his path. Scarcely had he entered the forest when a puff of wind extinguished the light.

"No matter; God does all things for the best," said Akiba, and he trudged bravely on.

Suddenly he heard a fearful roar and a piercing cry. A hungry lion had fallen upon his donkey and torn him to pieces. "It is for the best," said the poor rabbi. He walked on and presently felt something touch him in passing. He stretched out his hand and behold! his only remaining traveling companion, the cock, was no more, for a wildcat had seized and devoured him.

"This, too, is for the best," was, as usual, the patient rabbi's assertion.

At last the long night passed, and the weary rabbi, faint from loss of sleep, emerged from the wood. Whom did he meet but several unfortunate travelers whose clothing was torn to shreds, and who were bleeding from many wounds. Akiba speedily inquired what had befallen them.

"Do you not know?" they answered, "Last night a band of robbers attacked the village and destroyed it with fire and sword. It is a miracle that we escaped."

"The merciful God has saved my life," thought the rabbi. "Had I slept in the village, I, too, might have been killed. Had my lamp not been extinguished, the robbers would have discovered me. And if the poor beasts had not met their death, the donkey would have betrayed me with his braying and the cock with his crowing.

Truly more than ever am I convinced that whatever God does is for the best!"

UNQUESTIONING FAITH

"A woman of valor who can find? For her price is far above rubies."—Proverbs 31:10.

While Rabbi Meir was holding a discourse in the school on the Sabbath, his two sons died. The unhappy mother laid her beloved children upon a bed and spread a covering over them.

When the Sabbath services were over, the rabbi returned to his home and at once inquired for his sons. His wife gave an evasive answer and handed him a goblet of wine, in order that he might pronounce the customary blessing. Again he asked for his sons.

"They are not far away," she replied, and placed the evening meal before him. After they had partaken of it, she said to him, "Rabbi, I have a question to ask thee. Before daybreak a man came to our house and entrusted two jewels to my keeping. Now he hath come in order to claim them. Shall I return them to him?"

"Surely thou wouldst not hesitate to restore to the owner what belongeth to him!"

"Nay, but I wished to ask thy advice." Taking him gently by the hand, she led him to the room where the dead lay, and removed the cloth that covered them.

The rabbi wept and lamented. "My sons! My sons! The light of my eyes!"

The grief-stricken mother turned to him, saying, "Rabbi, didst thou not tell me it is our duty to restore to the owner that which belongeth to him? The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

Thus did the good wife endeavor to comfort her husband and assuage his grief. Of such it is said, "Her price is far above rubies."

ISRAEL'S FAITH JUSTIFIED

A king who was betrothed to a beautiful maiden undertook a long journey.

Months and years passed, but the king did not return. The companions of the bride looked at her in pity as they murmured, "Poor forsaken one! The king will never return."

The maiden fell sick and was grievously troubled over the words which her would-be friends had uttered with such careless certainty.

Then she took up the scroll inscribed in the king's own hand, whereon he had written his promise to share with her his crown and kingdom. As she read the beloved words, her every suspicion vanished and she was again cheerful and happy.

At last the king returned. "How couldst thou remain true to me after so many years?" he asked.

"I had thy written promise as a pledge, O king. The royal word never faileth."

At one time the nations of the earth said with malicious intent to Israel, "Your God hath forsaken you."

Israel, grievously troubled, assembled weeping in the Temple and schools of learning, where they read in the sacred writings of the Divine prophecy of freedom. And their spirit rose within them and hope was renewed in their hearts.

In the last days God will say to Israel, "How could ye remain true to me through the ages?" And Israel will answer, "Thy Law, O God, was a pledge of Thy love and of Thy never-failing providence."

IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD

A certain pious Jew paused on his way to town to engage in prayer. A prince who was about to pass by him greeted him, but the Jew, absorbed in his devotions, did not return the greeting. The prince flew into a rage and could scarcely contain himself until the man had concluded his prayers, when he cried:

"Fool! You disregard your own Law, which commands self-preservation. By your own act you endanger your life. Why did you not regard my greeting? If it had pleased me to pierce your heart with my sword, who would have called me to account for your death?"

"Sir, subdue your wrath, I beg of you. Suppose you were in the presence of the king and engaged in conversation with him. If, in the meantime, a friend passed by and greeted you, would you turn aside from your interview in order to reply to the salutation?"

"It were the worse for me if I did so."

"You acknowledge the homage due to an earthly king,—a human being who is here today and gone tomorrow. Consider, then, what I owe in reverence to the King of Kings, in whose presence I was standing when you interrupted my prayer. What would you have me do?"

The prince acknowledged the justice of the argument, and permitted the man to go on his way.

CREATION REVEALS THE CREATOR

An unbeliever came to Rabbi Akiba and asked him who created the world.

The rabbi replied, "The Holy One, blessed be He."

The other demanded proof of the statement, whereupon the rabbi said, "What art thou wearing?"

"A garment," said the unbeliever.

"Who made it?"

"The weaver," was the reply.

"Before I can believe thee, give a proof of thy statement," rejoined the rabbi.

"Why should I do so? Thou knowest that the weaver wove the garment."

"Dost thou not also know that the Holy One, blessed be He, created His world? Just as the house testifies to the builders, and the garment testifies to the weavers, and the door testifies to the carpenter, so likewise the world points to the Holy One as its Creator."

¶ ¶

THE MERIT OF THE FATHERS

Abraham spake unto God, "Lord of the Universe, when thou didst say to me, 'Take now thy son,' I might have answered, 'Thou didst say to me but yesterday, "In Isaac shall thy seed be blessed," and now Thou sayest, "Take thy son." ' But Thou knowest I hid my sorrow and did Thy will without complaint. Therefore, I pray, if ever the descendants of Isaac fall by the wayside and sin, remember his willingness to be sacrificed and manifest Thy compassion unto them."

MAN IMMORTAL

Rabbi Jose ben Chalafta once paid a visit to a man who had lost his son. As the rabbi gave expression to laughter in the house of mourning, the father inquired the meaning of his strange behavior.

The rabbi answered, "Why should we be sorrowful? Surely we have faith in the Lord of the universe who will permit you to meet your son again in the life hereafter."

A renegade sitting by said reproachfully, "Has our friend not sorrow enough without being troubled by idle talk? Can the fragments be put together again? Has it not been said, 'Thou shalt dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel?' "

The rabbi offered the following reply: "It is true that the shards of earthen vessels can not be made whole. Yet those of glass when shattered can be recreated. Why? Because the glass is blown by the breath of man, and when the pieces are reduced to sand, they may once more be formed into vessels. How much greater then is the Divine power which can breathe life again into the form that we call dead!"

AS A FATHER PITIETH HIS CHILDREN

The son of a certain king had developed sinful habits and rebelled against his father's wishes. When confronted with reproofs and threats, he ran away. The distracted father sent a servant in search of the fugitive, but the youth, overcome with shame and conscience-stricken at the evidence of his father's devotion, lacked the courage to return and to appear before the king. But the king sent him this message: "My son, what child need be ashamed to return to his father who loves him?"

Thus God says to sinners, "Let not your sense of guilt keep you from returning to your Father who loves you and freely forgives the repentant sinner."

GRATITUDE

"THE PRAYER OF THE UPRIGHT IS HIS DELIGHT"

A king invited many of his subjects to a feast. Some of the guests, after eating and drinking, sang his praises. Others ate and drank, but had no words of praise or gratitude for the host.

The king, seeing this, wished to dismiss the entire company, but the queen interceded, saying, "My lord king, pay no heed to those who partake of thy bounty and fail to thank thee, but give heed to those who have eaten at thy table and have rendered thanks."

When the Israelites give thanks to God for His manifold favors, God graciously accepts their prayers of gratitude. But when godless peoples enjoy the blessings of life without rendering thanks, the Law acts as intercessor and pleads, "Lord of all worlds, look not upon those who provoke Thee to anger, but rather upon Thy children who praise Thy holy name and who show homage by obeying Thy sacred words."

THE SPIRIT HALLOWS THE SACRIFICE

King Agrippa one day desired to offer a thousand sacrifices upon the altar. He sent word to the High Priest as follows: "Let no one but me offer a sacrifice this day."

Soon after, a poor man carrying two turtle doves appeared before the priest, saying, "I pray you, offer these up."

"I can not," answered the priest, "for the king has forbidden it."

Then said the man, "I catch four turtle doves each day; two provide me with food, and the other two are for the sacrifice. If you do not accept them for this purpose, I am deprived of my sustenance."

Moved by the man's sincerity, the priest accepted the offering. That night Agrippa had a dream in which this incident was pictured. He sent for the High Priest the next day and said to him, "Did I not command thee to accept no sacrifice but mine?"

"The priest related what had occurred, and when Agrippa heard the story, he said, "In the eyes of the Eternal the two turtle doves are as acceptable as the richest offering in my kingdom. I commend your judgment; thou hast done well."

THE VALUE OF PATERNAL EXAMPLE

There once lived a man whose sole possession consisted of a large field, which he cultivated with great industry. In strict accordance with the Law, he gave to the priesthood each year a tithe of his produce.

God prospered his undertakings and every year the field yielded a thousand measures of grain, of which the owner regularly dedicated a hundred measures to the priesthood.

As the owner of the field felt the approach of death, he called his son to his bedside and said to him, "My sole bequest to you is my field, but you will find it more than sufficient for your needs if you will follow my advice. Take care not to neglect the tithes and you will reap rich harvests as I have always done."

At the end of the first year, the son carefully followed his father's instructions and, as usual, the land yielded a thousand measures. But, in the course of time, the new owner became dissatisfied with relinquishing a tenth of his income and decided to give a smaller portion. But this time the field produced only in proportion to the amount previously given.

Vexed and disappointed, the owner decided to give even less, and the field again yielded less. And each year the smaller the offering, the more meager became the harvest until the field produced but a hundred measures, which, in happier days, was but a tenth of the total crop.

The neighbors of the present owner, grieved at his niggardly conduct, one day appeared at his home dressed in festive array as though invited to share a joyful occasion. When the reluctant host saw this

strange procession, he was overcome with rage and cried, "What! You come to mock me!"

"God forbid!" answered they. "We come to wish you joy in the new honor that has been bestowed upon you. We know that your field has yielded the tenth part of it former harvest. This is as it should be. At one time you were the owner and God was the priest; now God is the owner and you yourself have become the priest."

¶ ¶

INDEBTEDNESS TO GOD

The giving of tithes was subject to certain rules. For example, fruits and grains were exempt from tithes if they were brought into the city by certain roads, but not so if other roads were followed.

It was the custom of some citizens to bring their harvest to the town by one of these roads so as to evade the prescribed tithe. A certain rabbi one day met several of his friends, and he observed that they were trying to evade the customary tithe. In a tone of rebuke he said to them, "My friends, how different were your forefathers who endeavored always to find a way to fulfill their duties to God."

In their discomfiture the men made no response. Adopting a milder tone and eyeing the baskets approvingly, he continued: "Beautiful fruits, these! Will you give me a basketful?"

"It is yours!" cried the friends heartily.

With stern displeasure the rabbi then exclaimed, "You refused a tithe of your harvest to your Heavenly Father and yet are willing to give it to one of His creatures!"

LOYALTY

RELIGION FORTIFIES AGAINST SUFFERING

Rabbi Akiba was seized and thrown into prison at the same time that Pappos ben Judah suffered a similar fate.

"What has brought you here?" inquired Akiba.

"Hail to you, Rabbi Akiba, who suffer for the sake of the Law; woe to Pappos, who has been imprisoned for idle things," replied his companion.

One day the man who served Akiba with water was reprimanded by the keeper for bringing too large a quantity, and was bidden to throw half of it away.

"Give me water to wash my hands," said the rabbi.

"There is scarcely enough to drink," answered the man, "not to speak of washing your hands."

But Akiba suffered thirst rather than disregard the injunction which commanded the washing of hands.

On the Day of Atonement, he was brought before the tyrant Rufus. It was the hour for reading the Shema. At the behest of the tyrant, the rabbi was beaten unmercifully, but he still continued to read the Shema.

"Old man," said the tormentors, "you are either deaf or hardened against pain."

"Neither the one nor the other," was the reply. "Every day have I read this verse: 'Love thy God

with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might.' I have loved Him with all my heart and with all my might, but never before this hour have I understood the meaning of 'with all thy soul.' Now, indeed, am I given the opportunity to love God with all my soul."

His disciples pleaded with him, "Master, how long will this torment endure?"

"I have always pondered over the words 'with all my soul', and at last I am permitted to give my life as proof of my faith in God," said Rabbi Akiba, and, as he was breathing the word "echod", his soul departed.

NO COMPROMISE

Although the Roman rule, in its persecution of the Jews, forbade them to practise their religious duties, Rabbi Akiba boldly called public assemblies, over which he presided.

Pappos ben Judah, one day, finding the rabbi busying himself with the Law, said to him, "Are you not afraid thus to defy the imperial edict?"

"Is it Pappos, famed for his learning, who speaks thus? No, they are the words of a fool," replied Akiba. "Listen to this story: A fox went to the shore of a sea and saw how the fishes hid themselves in the water. 'Why do you hide?' he asked them. 'Because of the nets and hooks with which man tries to catch us,' they answered. 'Come up on dry land,' he suggested to them, 'and we will live together.' 'You are considered the shrewdest of beasts,' said they, 'but you are really the most foolish of them, for if we are overcome by anxiety in our own element, how much greater would be our fear upon dry land!'

"So it is with us. If we are in danger while occupied in the study of the Law, of which it is said 'It is thy life', how much greater the peril if we desist therefrom!"

A JEWISH MARTYR

Miriam, the widow of Rabbi Joshua Gamala, was cast into prison with her seven sons. The emperor commanded the eldest to be brought into his presence and demanded that he bow before the imperial likeness.

"Never!" exclaimed the young man, "for it is written, 'Thou shalt not bow down to them nor serve them.' "

The emperor ordered him to be seized and executed.

The second son was then called and the same command was given to him, but he proudly declared, "My brother refused to disobey the divine command and I do likewise. It is written, 'Thou shalt have no other gods besides Me.' "

He, too, was executed at the emperor's behest.

The third, fourth, fifth, and sixth sons, with equal steadfastness and piety, refused to bow down before the emperor's likeness, and each went to his doom.

At last the youngest son was summoned. He refused, as courageously as his six brothers, to disobey the Law, saying, "It is written, 'Know therefore this day, and consider it in thy heart, that the Lord is God in heaven above and upon the earth beneath; there is none else.' "

"Thou art yet too young to die," said the emperor. "Bow down before the image and live."

"Nay," returned the lad, "we know that the Lord is King for ever and ever, and that the heathen has perished from the land. 'Man liveth today and dieth tomorrow; today he is rich and tomorrow poor, but God liveth for all eternity.' "

"See, thy brothers are no more," urged the emperor. "I will cast my ring upon the ground before the image. Do thou stoop and recover it so that those assembled may think that thou dost obey my command."

"Woe to thee, O emperor," said the youth. "Thou fearest what man thinks, and should I not fear the King of Kings, the eternal God?"

"Is there an eternal God?" questioned the emperor.

"Woe to thee. Is the earth without a master? Thou askest, 'Hath thy God a mouth?' It is written of thy gods, 'They have mouths, but they speak not.' Of our God it is said, 'By the word of the Lord were the heavens made.' 'Hath thy God eyes?' Of thy gods it is said, 'Eyes have they, but they see not.' But of our God it is said, 'The eyes of the Lord are over the whole earth.' 'Hath thy God ears?' Of thy gods it is said, 'They have ears but they hear not.' Of our God it is written, 'The Lord hearkened and heard.' 'Hath thy God hands?' Of thy gods it is said, 'They have hands, but they feel not.' Of our God it is written, 'Mine hand hath laid the foundation of the earth. 'Hath thy God a nose?' It is said of thy Gods, 'Noses they have, but they smell not.' Of our God it is written, 'The Lord smelled a sweet savour.' 'Hath thy God feet?' It is said of thy gods, 'Feet have they, but they walk not.' But of our God it is said, 'And His feet shall stand on that day upon the Mount of Olives!' "

"If thy God doth possess all these attributes," replied the emperor, "why doth He not deliver thee out of my hands as he delivered Chananiah, Mishael, and Azariah from the power of Nebuchadnezzar?"

"They were pious men," replied the lad, "and King Nebuchadnezzar was worthy of having a miracle performed in his reign. But thou art not deserving of such. Even if thou sparest my life, there are others who may seek it. But know that, in the days to come, God will lay my death at thy door!"

But the emperor ordered the lad to be led to his execution.

¶ ¶

MARTYRDOM FOR RELIGION'S SAKE

An edict had gone forth from Rome, prohibiting, on pain of death, the observance of Divine worship on the part of the Jews.

Certain sages, fearing that disobedience would result in the destruction of their people, advised submission to the tyrannical decree.

Among such advisors was Rabbi Joseph ben Kisma, who, because of his submissiveness, was held in favor by the administration.

Rabbi Joseph fell ill and, as the end of his days drew near, he was visited by his friend Rabbi Chananiah ben Teradion, who despite the Roman edict, boldly pursued his calling as teacher of the Law.

Rabbi Joseph addressed his visitor thus. "My son, do you not realize that it is the will of God that this government have dominion over us? Is it not Rome that has laid waste our Holy City, destroyed our Temple, and put to death our martyrs? Why do you persist in holding public meetings and in openly defying the authorities by teaching the Law?"

Chananiah replied, "I put my trust in the Lord."

"What an answer! I try to impress upon you the terrible dangers that threaten you and you talk thus! I fear that you and the Book of the Law will both be cast into the fire."

But Chananiah, oblivious of earthly matters and with his whole soul directed towards Heaven, eagerly asked the dying man, "Master, what do you think will be my lot in the future world?"

My son," answered ben Kisma, "before I judge, I must know of your deeds."

"My deeds? For example, one day a sum of money for charity was entrusted to me. I took money from my own purse and added it to the other. It has always been my custom to give away all but that which I need for my daily sustenance."

"O my son!" exclaimed Rabbi Joseph, greatly touched. "If such be your mode of life, may my portion be as yours in the world to come!"

Shortly after, Rabbi Joseph ben Kisma died.

His funeral was attended by many of the foremost men of Rome who wished to do honor to one who had shown himself obedient to the imperial edict.

A little while after the funeral, the Romans came upon an assembly which was being addressed by Rabbi Chananiah, who was holding a discourse upon the Book of the Law.

Enraged at his open defiance of their authority, the Romans condemned the rabbi to be burned. The sacred writings were wrapped about his body and he was consigned to the flames. Silent under the inexpressible torture, the martyr calmly met his death.

In her unspeakable despair, his daughter cried, "Is such the reward of your virtue?"

The martyr replied, "The pain would be harder to bear if the flames were consuming me alone. Do you not see that the Holy Book also is doomed to ashes?"

The grief-stricken pupils of Rabbi Chananiah were carried away by his marvelous fortitude.

"Master, what mysterious vision illumines your countenance?"

"My children! I see the parchment of this book consumed to ashes, but the holy words fly triumphant to heaven!"

With these words, the dying martyr breathed his last.

THE ONENESS OF GOD

THE DESTROYER OF IDOLS UNDAUNTED

Terah, the father of Abraham, was a dealer in images. One day, when the business called him away, he left the boy in charge of the shop.

To a customer coming in to purchase an idol, Abraham said politely, "Wilt thou tell me how old thou art?"

"Sixty years," replied the man.

The boy, with flashing eyes, cried out, "How blind thou art! A man of sixty, and thou wouldst worship as a god a thing made in a day by the hand of man!"

The man reddened, cast down his eyes, and left without another word.

Another time, a woman entered, carrying a dish of meal. She said to Abraham, "Take this meal, it is an offering to these gods."

As soon as she had gone, Abraham seized a hammer and with it broke every idol in the shop save one, in whose hands he placed the implement.

When Terah returned and saw the destruction, he turned wrathfully to his son, demanding to know what had caused it.

"My father," replied Abraham, "hear what hath happened. A woman came with a dish of meal for a sacrifice. I placed it at the feet of the idols. Suddenly a great clamor arose. Each of the idols demanded the sacrifice. Amid threats and angry words, the largest of the images seized a hammer and see what hath happened!"

"Thou darest to mock me!" interrupted Terah. "Have these idols the power of speech?"

"Father, thou hast spoken truly! How then canst thou bow down and worship these objects which have neither speech nor hearing, which are fashioned by the hand of man?"

But Terah refused to be convinced and delivered his son into the hands of the idolatrous king Nimrod. Nimrod, endeavoring to force the lad to accept his own mode of worship, cried in threatening tones, "I command thee to bow down and worship this fire."

"Sir," answered the lad, "should I not rather worship water, which hath the power of extinguishing fire?"

"Be it so; worship the water."

"Were it not an injustice towards the clouds, which feed the streams and the sea?"

"Then worship the clouds."

"Yet what is the power of clouds when compared to that of the wind, which scattereth the clouds and driveth them away?"

"Then worship the wind."

"Should I not rather worship man, who controlleth fire, and water, and wind?"

"Thou wicked one!" cried Nimrod in fury, "I command thee to worship fire. We shall see whether thy God hath power to rescue thee!"

The vicious Nimrod bade his servants cast Abraham into a fiery furnace, but he was rescued by the will of the merciful Father, whom alone the brave lad would worship and serve.

ADONOY ECHOD—THE LORD IS ONE

When the voice of God resounded from sphere to sphere, from firmament to firmament, He manifested Himself to the eyes of His believers. The seven heavens opened their portals and revealed the one God, the Divine Majesty that compassed them all.

Then the Israelites, enraptured, cried, "Father, for us there is nothing but Thy glory; Thou alone rulest in the heavens; Thou alone rulest upon earth; we shall have no other God but Thee. Whenever we meet in prayer, we will bear witness to Thy greatness and will ever declare these words: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One!' "

¶ ¶

WHY JACOB HAD AN EASY DEATH

When Jacob was about to die he called his twelve sons to his bedside and said, "Hearken to the God of Israel, your father in heaven. Is there in your hearts a doubt of the greatness of God?"

Whereupon they answered in these words, "Hear, Israel, our father! As thou didst serve the Lord, so will we, for the Eternal our God, the Eternal is One!"

As Jacob heard these words, he whispered them with his dying lips and added, "Praised be the name of His glorious kingdom forever and ever."

Since that time the Israelites have repeated each morning and evening, "Hear, O Israel, the Eternal our God, the Eternal is One!"

THERE IS NONE LIKE GOD

The rabbis taught that all God's creations were made in pairs: heaven and earth, sun and moon, Adam and Eve, this life and the life hereafter. The glory of God, however, stands alone: "Hear O Israel, the Eternal our God, the Eternal is One!"

THE PRESENCE OF GOD

GOD'S NAMES SUGGESTED BY HIS ATTRIBUTES

God said to Moses, "Thou wouldst learn my name. I am named for my deeds. I am called God the Almighty, Lord of Hosts, Father, and Jehovah. When I judge the people, I am Father; when I wage war against evildoers, I am Lord of Hosts; when I judge sinners, I am God, the Almighty; when I take compassion upon the world, I am called Jehovah, for this name means merciful and gracious."

According to Rabbi Eliezer, the name of God is used in connection with good only, not with evil. "And God called the light day," it is written, "and the darkness He called night."

It is believed that at the creation God foresaw the work of the righteous and of the sinners. The statement, "God divided the light from the darkness" pertains not only to the physical world, but also to the good and evil deeds of men.

GOD IS EVERYWHERE

A Roman emperor addressed the following remark to Rabbi Gamaliel: "Your teachings are inexplicable. According to your statement, the Divine Majesty is present wherever ten men assemble for prayer. There must therefore, in truth, be many such divine majesties in order to be manifested in the great number of assemblies throughout the world."

The rabbi, without replying, called one of the emperor's body-servants and struck him lightly upon the forehead, accompanying the act with a look of severe rebuke.

"Why did you do that?" asked the royal master, in astonishment.

"Do you not observe," answered the rabbi, "that the sun is shining upon your majesty's countenance? Was it not his duty to deflect the rays of the sun from your face?"

"What nonsense! Deflect the sun's rays? Does not the sun spread her rays over the whole earth?"

"Yet the sun is but a feeble light compared with the ineffable glory of the Divine Presence. Can you not realize that the Divine Light can spread throughout the world wherever men praise the name of God?"

WORDS FALL SHORT

A cantor, in place of chanting the usual prayer, sang an original hymn of praise, consisting of an interminable number of divine attributes.

The hymn began with the words, "O holy God, Thou art great, mighty, eternal, all-powerful, sublime, ineffable—" and continued in the same strain.

Rabbi Jochanan, who was present during the chanting, waited patiently until the hymn was ended. He then addressed the cantor thus: "My friend, hast thou really exhausted the praise due the King of Kings? What magnificent courage!

"We, in our prayers, hardly dare to ascribe to God those attributes which the Holy Scriptures teach us, lest, in our ignorance, we use such terms as befit not His Divine Majesty."

"And thou wouldst sing His praises with such careless glibness? Dost thou think to praise God fitly in so unrestrained a manner? If an earthly king is ruler over millions of subjects, were it proper to address him as king over thousands?"

"When thou speakest of God, the more thou wouldst try to exhaust His attributes, the farther dost thou remain from the truth."

FINITE MAN CAN NOT GRASP THE INFINITE GOD

The emperor, half in earnest and half in jest, said to Rabban Gamaliel, "You speak with such confidence of the immeasurableness of your God. I will wager that I can tell you where He is at the present moment and what He is doing."

The rabbi appeared preoccupied and heaved a prodigious sigh.

"Why do you sigh?" inquired the emperor.

"Alas!" replied the rabbi. "I have a son who has gone far from home. A temporary disagreement caused him to leave me. I wonder when he will return to me?"

"How should I know whither your son has gone?"

"Is it possible! You are ignorant of the things in this world and yet would compass heavenly matters?"

Upon another occasion, the emperor remarked, "You say that the stars are innumerable. Surely you are jesting. I am willing to wager that I have counted them and can tell you their number."

"How infinite your knowledge!" exclaimed Rabban Gamaliel. "But tell me,—how many teeth have you?"

The emperor hastily inserted a finger in his mouth and began to count them.

"Poor mortal!" said the rabbi, laughingly. "He does not even know the number of teeth in his mouth and yet would have me think he has counted the stars in the firmament!"

ROYALTY ITS OWN HERALD

Rabbi Sheshet was blind. One day a great multitude gathered to see the king, who was about to pass, and the wise rabbi chanced to be in the midst of the eager, noisy throng.

A Sadducee, catching sight of the blind one, exclaimed in scornful accents, "Buckets are lowered into a well to draw water, but who could use a fragment of wood for that purpose?" By those contemptuous words he meant to indicate that the coming of the king would mean nothing to one unable to witness the royal procession.

The rabbi, overhearing the remark, replied, "Wait but a little while and you will see that I, who am blind, can distinguish more than you, whose sight is good."

The first division of the royal train approached in the midst of joyous shouting.

"Attention, O Rabbi, it is the king!" cried the Sadducee.

"Impossible", cried the blind man, "The king is not yet here."

The second section presently appeared, and the tumult grew ever greater.

"Friend, open wide your eyes, for the king is approaching," cried the Sadducee again.

"Not yet," repeated the rabbi. "The king is not yet come."

Soon the third section began to pass and a reverent silence manifested itself. The blind man cried, "It is the king!"

Amazed at his discernment, the Sadducee exclaimed, "How did you know that?"

Said the rabbi: "It is written, 'And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still, small voice.' For only then did God appear. I knew that a king of flesh and blood was a feeble image of the King of Kings, and that his presence would be heralded by silent homage."

As the king passed by, the sage uttered a blessing, "Praise be to God who bestows His grace and mercy upon mankind."

¶ ¶

SEEING GOD

Said Emperor Trajan to Rabbi Joshua, "I would like to see your God."

"Sir," replied the rabbi, "mortal eyes can not endure the sight of God's ineffable glory."

"I will make the venture," returned the emperor.

"Come with me," said the rabbi.

It was an excessively warm day and, since it was the noon hour, the sun stood high in the heavens. The rabbi led his companion to an open field, pointed to the sun, and said, "Sir, fix your gaze upon yonder sun."

"Impossible! The light dazzles me."

"And yet the sun is only one of the innumerable servants of His Divine Majesty. You can not endure to gaze upon it; then how can you expect to behold the glory of the Creator?"

GOD'S LOVINGKINDNESS TOWARD ISRAEL

EVERY GENERATION HAS ITS POTENT INFLUENCE

"The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down."—Ecclesiastes 1:5.

Before the life of one great man is at an end, God causes another to arise and fill his place. On the day of Rabbi Akiba's death, Rabbi Judah Ha-Nasi was born. Before the sun of Moses' life had set, the sun of Joshua's life rose. Instances might thus be multiplied to prove that in every age the work of good men has been continuous.

¶ ¶

BLESSING IN DISGUISE

A certain king, in honor of his son's marriage, had a hall in his palace magnificently decorated. But the king, displeased at his son's conduct, entered the hall, tore down the hangings, and destroyed the decorations. The prince's steward however, carried a pipe and played upon it.

"How canst thou make merry when the king hath ruined his son's wedding preparations?" asked the courtiers.

He replied, "I rejoice because the king has vented his wrath upon the hall and not upon his son."

Asaph was accosted with the rebuke, "God hath destroyed His Temple and thou canst sit here and sing!"

"I sing," replied he, "because He hath vented His wrath upon wood and stone, and not upon Israel."

MAN NEVER FORSAKEN BY GOD

Among a number of passengers on board a ship there was but one Jew. All the others were heathens.

As they landed upon an island, they said to him, "Here is money; take it, go ashore, and buy with it what thou seest."

"I am a stranger and know not the way," replied the Jew.

"Is it not said," returned the heathens, "that thy God is ever with thee and watcheth over thee?"

¶ ¶

THE MERIT OF THE FATHERS

"The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand forever."—Isaiah 40:8.

A king had a valued friend to whom he said, "Come with me, and I will bestow a gift upon thee."

The friend did as he was bidden, but he died before he could receive the gift.

The king then said to the son of the deceased, "Although thy father is no more, I will deliver unto thee that which I promised him. Come and receive the gift."

The king is the King of Kings; the friend is Abraham, to whom God said, "Get thee out of thy country, and away from thy kindred and from thy father's house. Arise, walk through the land, for I will give it unto thee." After Abraham died, God made known to Moses His intention of bestowing the Promised Land upon the children of Israel.

GOD'S PATERNAL CARE OF ISRAEL

When the Egyptian phalanx, in pursuit of Israel, was gaining ground, the Angel of God stood between the pursued and the pursuer.

If a father, journeying with his son upon a lonely and dangerous road, is attacked by robbers, he thrusts his child behind him so that he may protect the lad with his own person.

If, as he continues his journey, a wild beast pursues them, he hastily pushes the boy to the front in order to shield him from danger.

If the sun pours its hot rays down upon them, the father spreads his mantle over the child's head.

If hunger assails them, he spares of his own portion and gives a double share to the child.

If thirst parches their throats, the father climbs the steep ascent to gather a few drops for the beloved one.

When, exhausted by the weary journey, the child is unable to go further, the father lovingly carries him in his arms.

With such care and loving protection did God lead Israel through the desert.

KING DAVID AND THE SPIDER

There is nothing in the world which does not, at times, lend itself to a useful purpose. King David was one day musing over various things which he thought might well be dispensed with.

"Of what use is the spider?" thought he. "It surely serves no purpose in the world. It spends its days spinning a web that is both useless and unsightly."

Then his thoughts turned to the afflictions which are visited upon human beings. "How grievous is a mind bereft of reason! Why does God visit such misfortunes upon man? I know that He is all-wise and ordains everything for a purpose, but what good was ever done by insanity?"

Not long after, David found it necessary to flee from Saul. He was captured in the land of the Philistines by the brothers of Goliath and brought before the king of Gath. Had the enemy known that their captive was the valiant David, he would have been instantly put to death. To avert this danger, David pretended to be insane and acted in such a way that the Philistines, believing the stranger to be a harmless idiot, permitted him to go in safety.

Upon another occasion, David hid in the cave of Adullam. It happened that after he had sought refuge there, a spider spun its web across the entrance of the cave. His pursuers who passed that way were about to search the cave when they noticed the spider's web.

"It is useless to search here," said they, "for no one could have entered without destroying this web," and they continued on their way.

Thus David discovered that his life had been spared by means of the very things which he had believed were without reason or purpose.

¶ ¶

GOD'S CHOSEN

A king was in the habit of instructing his body-servant to give particular care to a certain one of his many royal garments. Not a day passed but that the king inquired whether this especial robe had been carefully brushed and folded.

One day the servant could not refrain from saying, "O king, thou hast not less than a hundred beautiful robes, and yet thou always speakest of this one."

The king replied, "No other garment is as precious to me as this one, for it was this garment which I wore on the day of my coronation."

In a like manner did Moses say, when God gave to him a thousand laws for Israel, "O God, there are hundreds and hundreds of nations, and yet Thou speakest only of Israel."

And God answered, "They are all My people, but Israel is the one I cherish most, for it was the first to spread My truth throughout the world."

TIMES AND SEASONS ARE IN GOD'S HANDS

Rabbi Akiba and his pupils were in the habit of assembling every morning under a certain fig tree in order to pursue their studies. The owner of the tree came each morning, even earlier than they, to gather the fruit.

The rabbi said, "Perhaps our presence here is displeasing him. Let us go elsewhere."

The rabbi and his pupils therefore went to a different place, but the owner came to them and said, "Why did you leave? I felt honored by your presence and now you have deprived me of that pleasure."

They answered, "We feared you might suspect us of taking the fruit of your fig tree."

Yielding to his persuasion, however, they returned to the former place. Thereafter the owner rose early as before and came to the scene of their studies, but did not disturb the fruit. As the sun poured down upon the tree, the figs became worm eaten.

"Truly," said the rabbi to his disciples, "the man knows best when the fruit should be plucked. Even so God knows when the time has come to take His chosen ones unto Himself."

ISRAEL, THE WORLD'S REDEEMER

A certain king had upon his estate a fine garden in which grew rows of fig trees, vines, pomegranate trees, and apple trees, all of which were placed under the care of a gardener.

After a time the king came to visit the garden to see if it were well cared for, and behold! he found it overrun with weeds and briers. He sent for a workman and had the weeds removed. Among the briers the king had discovered a beautiful rose, whose delicate fragrance he enjoyed. "On account of this lovely rose," said the king, "the whole garden shall be redeemed."

The whole world was created on account of the Torah. When God found that evil filled the earth after six and twenty generations had inhabited it, He had the evildoers removed by a flood.

But He had discovered a lovely rose among the briers, and that rose was Israel. He saved the worthy flower and rejoiced when the Ten Commandments were joyously accepted by the children of Israel as they said, "All which the Lord hath said will we do."

God then said, "For the sake of this rose shall the garden be redeemed for the service of the Law, and for Israel's sake shall the world be saved."

ISRAEL COMPARED WITH THE DOVE

"Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we are escaped."—Psalms 124:7.

A dove was sleeping peacefully in her nest. A venomous serpent saw her and crept toward her.

She flew to another place and built another nest. There a fire broke out and consumed the serpent which had followed her to the second nest.

The dove again flew away and settled upon a roof.

Now that the serpent was dead and the nest destroyed, the dove was asked, "How long wilt thou fly from place to place?"

At last she found an abiding place where she remained in safety.

The Israelites in Egypt had a similar experience. Pharaoh, the serpent, sought to destroy them. They fled before him.

When Israel had departed, the Egyptians pursued them and were consumed as by a fire.

From place to place the children of Israel wandered until at last, in the Promised Land, they found an abiding place.

THE REWARD OF MERIT

There was once a king who wished to bequeath a part of his dominion to his son. But he thought, "He is yet too young to undertake his duties wisely. I will wait until he is older and more experienced. Then he will be able to rule with discretion."

Thus God caused the children of Israel to dwell forty years in the wilderness before He permitted them to enter the Promised Land.

He wanted them to be taught the meaning of the Laws He had given to Moses, their duties to their fellow men, and their obligations to the poor and to the stranger.

Therefore our forefathers were given a present of the Torah first so that by diligently learning its precepts, they might deserve the land of their heart's desire.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ISRAEL'S SURVIVAL

A quarrel arose among the straw, the stalk, and the chaff, each maintaining that for its sake the field had been sown. Finally the wheat said, "Wait until

you are brought to the threshing floor and you shall see on whose account the field was sown."

It came to pass as the wheat had said. The master prepared for the threshing. The chaff was blown away by the wind. The master threw the straw upon the ground and burned the stalk. But he carefully preserved the wheat, and all who saw it admired the perfect grains.

Thus it is with the nations of the earth. Each one thought, "I am of paramount importance; on my account was the world created." Then said Israel, "Wait until the appointed day and we shall see on whose account the world was created. As the Prophet Isaiah has said, 'Thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, in the Holy One of Israel.'"

LIKE TO LIKE

Of the advisers of Haman—there were three hundred and sixty-five, as many as the days in a solar year—his wife Zeresh was the shrewdest. She said to him, "The man thou wouldst destroy, this Mordecai the Jew, thou canst overcome by strategy alone. If thou castest him into an oven, he may be rescued, as were Chananiah and his companions. If thou throwest him to the lions, he may be saved, as was Daniel. If thou hast him confined in a dungeon, he may be freed, as was Joseph. If thou banishest him to the desert, he will emerge triumphant, as did his forefathers. If thou puttest out his eyes, he may cause the death of others, as did Samson the Philistine. Therefore crucify him, for not one of his race hath as yet suffered death in this way."

Haman was pleased with this advice, and had a gallows made.

When the trees were asked which would furnish wood for the gallows, the fig tree said, "Shall I give of my wood when the Israelites offer their first fruits of me?"

The pomegranate said, "Shall I give of my wood when the Israelites are compared to me?"

The ethrog cried, "How can I give of my wood when the Israelites use me in the Feast of Tabernacles?"

The acacia and fir-tree said, "Shall we lend ourselves for such a purpose when the tabernacle and Temple were built of our wood?"

Each tree raised a similar objection. Finally the thorn bush was asked whether it would be willing to

give some of its wood for the making of the gallows, and it replied, "I will indeed offer myself as a gallows, since it shall come to pass that the wicked Haman will be hanged thereon. My name is thorn and he, too, is a thorn unto Israel. It is fitting that one thorn should hang upon the other."

Thus it was that the gallows intended for Mordecai, and upon which the ruthless Haman was hanged, was made of the wood of the thorn-bush.

¶ ¶

GOD AND MAN

"And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart."—Genesis 6:6.

A heathen inquired of Rabbi Joshua ben Karcha, "Didst thou not say that God could foresee the future?"

"Certainly," said the rabbi.

"Then why is it written, 'It grieved Him at His heart?' "

"Hast thou a son?"

"Yes."

"What feelings stirred thy heart when he was born?"

"I rejoiced."

"And yet thou knowest that the day will come when he will die. In the hour of joy, one rejoices, and in the hour of death, one mourns. Thus it is with the Eternal," said the rabbi. "It is said that God mourned seven days over the wickedness of the earth before He sent the flood to destroy it. 'And it grieved Him at His heart.' "

THE SURVIVAL OF ISRAEL

The Israelites have been compared to a rock and the idolatrous nations of the world to a potter's vessel. If the rock fall upon the earthen vessel, woe to the vessel, and if the earthen vessel fall upon the rock, woe to the vessel.

Haman the wicked sought to destroy all the Jews in the kingdom of Ahasuerus. He is compared to a bird that built its nest upon the shore of the sea, where it was in danger of being swept away by the billows.

"I will not leave this place," said the bird, "until the sea has become dry land and the land has been transformed into the sea."

He then took some water in his bill and dropped it upon the land and he took grains of sand and dropped them into the sea.

Another bird which was watching the proceedings exclaimed, "O thou unhappy one, what will be thy end!"

Thus God spoke to Haman, "Thou fool! Dost thou think thou canst destroy the people I have spared? As thou livest, thy life shall be forfeited. They shall be saved and thou shalt die."

GOD IS LOVE

When Jacob went to his father to receive his blessing, deceit was in his heart and a lie upon his lips. And yet, despite his sin, God forgave him and blessed him.

When the subjects of a king rebel against him, they are guilty of treason and merit death. Yet when our forefathers fashioned the golden calf and declared, "These be thy gods, O Israel," God did not forsake them. In his manifold mercy He prepared a pillar of cloud to lead them in the wilderness by day and a pillar of fire by night, that they might know where to go. He gave them manna and brought forth water for their thirst. And since God withheld His curse even when sinners deserved it, and showered blessings upon them, let not man presume to curse his brother.

¶ ¶

GOD'S WAYS NOT MAN'S WAYS

Abel was oppressed by Cain, but God was with him. Noah was reviled by his contemporaries, yet he was saved when they were destroyed. Abraham was sentenced to death by Nimrod, but God was with him. Jacob was hated by Esau, but God befriended him. Joseph was ill-treated by his brothers, but he was raised to dignity and power. Moses was the object of Pharaoh's wrath, but he became the greatest of God's prophets. David was the mark of Saul's hatred, and yet he became king. The Israelites were oppressed among the nations, but they became the chosen people.

IN UNION THERE IS STRENGTH

When Jacob tarried all night at Mount Moriah, he took twelve of the stones of the altar whereon his father Isaac had been bound and set them up as a pillow in that place, to indicate that twelve tribes were destined to arise from him. And all twelve stones became one, to indicate that all the tribes were destined to become one people.

¶ ¶

ISRAEL'S BEST GUARANTEE

Before the Israelites were entrusted with the Law God demanded that they offer a pledge to ensure their faithful observance of its practices.

"Our fathers shall be our pledge," said Israel.

"They will not suffice," God answered. "Your fathers are not without blemish. Abraham asked for a proof of My promise in that he petitioned for the Promised Land for his descendants. Jacob was wanting in filial love."

"Let our prophets be our pledge," said Israel.

"Nor will the prophets suffice," answered God, "for the prophets, too, failed Me in that they prophesied in the name of Baal."

"Let our children be our pledge," said Israel.

"They will be acceptable to Me," answered God, "for the prayer of an innocent child is My delight."

PEACE

Beloved is peace, for God established it in the heavens. "He maketh peace in His high places.—" *Job 25:2.*

Beloved is peace, for God granted it throughout the earth. "Peace, peace, to him that is far off and to him that is near."—*Isaiah 57:19.*

Beloved is peace, for God denied it to evildoers. "There is no peace, saith the Lord, to the wicked." —*Isaiah 48:22.*

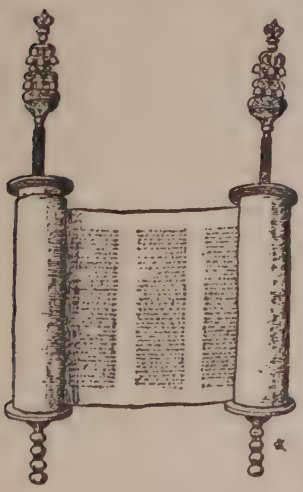
Great is peace, for God announced salvation to the Israelites through its power. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace!"

The Shema, the daily prayer, the priestly blessing, all end with words of peace. When God blessed the Israelites, He found no benediction so comprehensive as the one that would vouchsafe peace. "The Lord will give strength unto His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace."—*Psalms 29:11.*

ISRAEL AND THE LAW

THE WRITTEN AND THE ORAL LAW

When God appeared before Moses on Mt. Sinai to impart the Law to Israel, He revealed to him the Mishna, the Talmud, and the Haggadah in addition to the Torah.



Moses asked, "Shall I not write down all which Thou hast revealed to me?"

God answered: "No, I will not give them the complete Law now, for I know that the nations of the earth will one day overpower them and take the Law away from them and that they will be the despised among the nations. The commandments will I give them in the form of the Written Law, but the Mishna, the Talmud, and the Haggadah shall be the Oral Law, so that, when the nations gain dominion over them, their knowledge will distinguish them from the rest of mankind."

WE WILL DO AND WE WILL HEARKEN

A king said to his servants: "Here are two costly cups made of finely wrought gold. Guard them well and see that no harm befalls them."

It happened that, as one of the servants was carrying the cups to a place of safety, a calf near the palace gate ran against him. One of the cups was thrown to the ground and broken. Trembling with fear, the servant approached the king and confessed what had occurred.

"Let that be a lesson to you," said the king, "Take care of the other cup."

In like manner God said to the Israelites, "Two cups I offered you upon Mt. Sinai, and you drank thereof. One was, 'We will do' and the other, 'We will hearken'. The one cup, 'We will do,' you have broken, in that you have worshipped a golden calf. Now take heed not to destroy the second cup, 'We will hearken'."

¶ ¶

NOBLESSE OBLIGE

Rabbi Simeon ben Chalafta said, "He who studies the Law and observes not its ordinances is liable to greater punishment than he who has learned nothing."

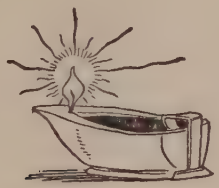
In the garden of a king a vine-dresser planted some trees and cut others down. Another vine-dresser planted none, neither did he hew any down. Which of the two merited the king's wrath? He who planted and cut down.

So, too, he who has learned the commandments set forth in the Torah and obeys them not is more culpable than he who is ignorant of them. "Let favor be shown to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness."—*Isaiah 26:10.*

ISRAEL, THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Israel is compared to an olive tree, for, as the oil of that tree gives forth light, so is Israel a light to the world.

The teachings of the Torah are a light to those who study them, for it is written, "Thy word is a lamp,"



and again, "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord."

But he who knows not the commandments is like one who walks in the darkness and falls for want of support. "The way of the wicked is as darkness, they know not on what they stumble."

VALUES

A man of wealth once sent to a rabbi a diamond of great price with the message, "I pray you send me in return something of equal value."

The rabbi sent him a Mezuzah in accordance with his request.

The rich man's servant returned to the rabbi, saying in the name of his master, "I gave you a gem of untold value and you presented me with that which can be bought for a mere trifle."

The rabbi gave the following reply: "Your treasure can not be compared to mine, for your gift is something I must watch constantly lest it be stolen, whereas I gave to you that which unceasingly watches over you. For it has been said, 'When thou walkest, it shall lead thee,' for the Law guides through life; 'when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee,' which means in the hour of death; 'and when thou wakest, it shall talk with thee,' for the Law guides us even in the life to come."

THE CHOSEN PEOPLE ALSO THE CHOOSING PEOPLE

Our sages taught that the Creator, before giving the Torah to our forefathers, offered it to every other nation so that none might say, "If the God of All had wished to bestow the Law upon us, we should have accepted it."

He appeared to the children of Esau and asked, "Will ye accept the Torah?"

They answered, asking in turn, "What does it contain?"

"Thou shalt not kill."

Then they said, "Wilt thou withdraw from us the blessing of our forefather Isaac, who declared, 'By thy sword shalt thou live?' We will not accept the Torah."

Then He asked the children of Ishmael, "Will ye accept the Torah?"

"What does it contain?"

"Thou shalt not steal."

They replied, "Wilt thou withdraw from us the blessing of our forefather Isaac? For it is written, 'His hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him.' We can not accept the Torah."

To every people on the earth did the Creator offer the Divine Law, but none would accept it. At last He appeared unto Israel. They alone declared, "All that the Lord hath said will we do."

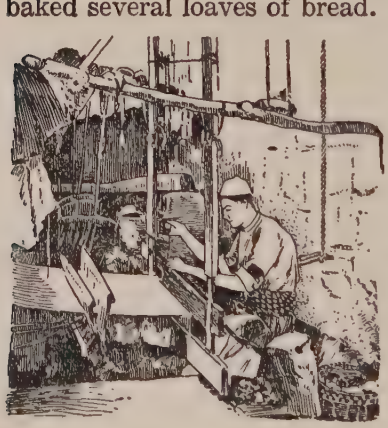
When the solemn promise was pronounced, myriads of angels came earthward and gave each Israelite two crowns, one inscribed with the words, "We will hearken," the other with the words, "We will obey." Accordingly the children of Israel accepted their glorious heritage with joyous hearts.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BOTH WRITTEN AND ORAL LAW

The Prophet Elijah related the following story: "In my wanderings I talked at length with a certain man who had zealously studied the Written Law, but was not concerned with the Oral Law. He said to me, 'The Holy Word was delivered upon Sinai and I accept it, but the Oral Law was certainly not proclaimed from Sinai'.

"My son," I answered him, "there was once a good man who had two dear friends whom he loved with equal tenderness. One day, as he was about to depart on a short journey, he bade farewell to his friends and gave each as a parting gift a measure of grain and a bundle of wool.

"The one friend ground his grain into flour and baked several loaves of bread. He had the wool spun into yarn and then woven into a fine table covering. The other friend allowed his gift to remain untouched.



"When the traveler returned, he inquired what had been done with the offerings. The one friend invited him to partake of a meal. His humble board was spread with the cloth woven from the wool that had been given him. The bread served was that made of the grain. The

donor praised the wisdom and forethought of the one and rebuked the other.

"It was truly both the Written and the Oral Law that were given on Mt. Sinai. The former is the grain and the wool, the latter is the finished product, the bread which was made of the grain and the cloth which was made of the wool."

¶ ¶

THE LAW AND THE PARABLES

Rabbi Chanina compared Solomon to a deep spring of clear and sparkling water which no one was able to

drink because the water was beyond reach. Then came one who, by means of a rope, lowered a pail into the spring, filled it, and drank. Following his example, others were able to obtain the water and drink refreshing draughts.

A person who lost a valuable pearl found it by means of a candle which he bought for a trifling sum.

The rabbis say, "Let man not disparage the use of parables, for through them did Solomon expound the Law."

THE LAW AND IMMORTALITY

"He that forsaketh reproof erreth."—Proverbs 10:17.

Rabbi Alexander said that he who has learned the Torah and obeys not its injunctions is like one who goes astray from the right path and denies his God. And he who obeys not the Law in this world will not be permitted to partake of the glories of the world to come.

¶ ¶

THE WAY THROUGH A LABYRINTH

Before the time of Solomon, the wisdom of the Torah was beyond man's comprehension. Through his analogies and proverbs, the meaning of the Law was made clear.

A certain palace had many portals and numerous apartments, but none could find his way among the labyrinthine passages. One man, wiser than the rest, conceived the plan of fastening a cord to the entrance gate. Unwinding it as he walked, he was able to penetrate into every part of the palace and on his way out followed the cord and thus found his way to the gate without difficulty.

Thus did Solomon make clear the meaning of the Torah in Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs.

THE TORAH COMPARED TO WATER

The words of the Torah are compared to water: as the waters surround the whole earth, so does the word of God reach from one end of the world to the other. As water sustains the life of man, so the Torah gives life to the world. As the water comes from above, so, too, was the Torah given from on high. As water cleanses, so the Torah cleanses the soul of man. As water falls in drops and, in the course of time, forms a mighty stream, so the Torah, though but a small portion be acquired at a time, becomes a spring of learning as time goes on. As water is a grateful draught to him who is thirsty, so is the Torah pleasant to him who searches for its treasures. As water seeks the lowest level, so does the Torah find an abiding place in the heart of the humble. As one who is unable to swim finds his death in the water, so does he who profits not by the teachings of the Law merit death.

¶ ¶

THE LIGHT TO THE TORAH

Rabbi Pinchas ben Jair said, "If thou searchest the Law as for hidden treasures, God will show thee the way. If thou losest something of value in thy house, thou wilt light many lamps and candles until thou findest the lost treasure. If thou art willing to do this for that which is but of transitory worth, with how much greater zeal shouldst thou seek the words of the Torah, which reveal the treasures not only of this world, but also of the life to come."

ISRAEL AND THE NATIONS

A REMARKABLE CONVERSION

A certain heathen was eager to adopt the Jewish religion, but he feared to incur the displeasure of his rich uncle. One day he went to his uncle to bid him farewell before departing on a journey with the intention of becoming a merchant.

"Why do you wish to become a merchant?" asked the older man. "If you want money, I will provide you with sufficient for all your needs."

"Sir," replied the nephew, "I wish to enter a trade, not so much for the purpose of gaining wealth, as to learn to know my fellow men. I beg your advice in the matter."

"If such be your wish, go your way. I will offer you the best possible advice: observe what merchandise is considered of least value and then invest in it, for it will advance in price some day."

The nephew departed and joined his Jewish friends. He studied the Law with them and accepted its doctrines.

After a time, the young man returned to the home of his uncle. The uncle, noticing that his nephew seemed somewhat embarrassed, inquired whether he had suffered any losses in his business. The young man, after considerable hesitation, confessed that he had adopted Judaism.

"Miserable wretch! How dared you?"

"Sir, I but followed your advice."

"My advice!" repeated the uncle angrily.

"Yes. You advised me to invest in the most disdained of commodities. Among the nations I found none more despised than Israel, and I know that one day it will be elevated above all others. With Israel have I cast my lot."

¶ ¶

THE JOY OF THE RIGHTEOUS

On their way to Rome, Rabban Gamaliel, Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah, Rabbi Joshua, and Rabbi Akiba, heard sounds of joyous tumult and shouting on the part of the spectators of a theatre. The first three began to weep, but Akiba laughed.

"How canst thou laugh when we are moved to tears?" they asked.

"Why do ye weep?"

"Should we not weep," they replied, "when these idolaters are enjoying life while the house of our God, His footstool, hath become a prey to the flames and a home of wild beasts!"

"Therefore do I laugh," responded Akiba, "for if those who provoke God to anger can thus enjoy life, how much greater the joy of those who obey His will!"

THE THORN BUSH AS A SYMBOL OF ISRAEL

A heathen once asked Rabbi Joshua ben Karcha, "Why did God appear to Moses in a thorn bush?"

The rabbi replied, "You would have asked me a similar question had God manifested Himself in a sycamore or in any other tree. Know this, that there is no place where the Divine Spirit does not exist."

Rabbi Eliezer said that, as the thorn bush is the humblest of trees, so Israel was the humblest and most oppressed of nations. Therefore God came to deliver it out of the hand of the Egyptians.

Rabbi Jose declared that, as the thorn bush is the hardest of trees and a bird caught in its prickly branches can not escape unhurt, so the Egyptian bondage was the hardest slavery in the world. Thus God said, "I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt."

The thorn bush, a hardy plant, thrives wherever water is to be found. Even so does Israel grow through the teaching of the Law. In the words of Isaiah, "Every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters."

The thorn bush produces both flowers and thorns. In Israel likewise may be found the righteous as well as the wicked.

BLASPHEMY'S UNDOING

The wicked Titus had desecrated the altar and boasted of his shameful acts. Not long after, he undertook a voyage on the Great Sea. A tempest arose and the waters threatened to swallow up the vessel.

"It is only on the sea that the God of the Jews is powerful!" exclaimed Titus. "Let Him but try His strength on the dry land, and we shall see who is the victor."

"Thou wicked one," said God. "I will send the least of my creatures and it shall be the instrument of thy death."

In the course of time, an insect flew into the nose of Titus, causing him severe pain, in consequence of which he was seized with an illness that resulted in his death.

Thus through even the smallest of His creatures God punishes those who defy His omnipotence.

GOD HUMBLES THOSE WHO KNOW HIM NOT

"I know not the Lord and moreover I will not let Israel go." ***—Exodus 5:2.***

When Moses and Aaron appeared before Pharaoh, commanding him to free the Israelites, he replied, "Is your God young or old? How many cities has He conquered? How many countries has He taken? How many years has He ruled over you?"

Moses and Aaron answered, "Our God is possessed of strength and power that fill the universe. Before the world was created He was God and will be forevermore. It was He who gave you life."

"What are His creations?" inquired Pharaoh.

They answered him, "He spread out the heavens, and established the earth. The clouds are His shield, His spear is fire, His sword is the lightning. He causes the hills and mountains to exist and clothes them with plants. He sends rain and dew. 'He removeth kings and setteth up kings.' "

"I know not the Lord," replied Pharaoh. "Why should I hearken to His voice?"

"Thou wicked one," said God to him, "thou wilt yet say, 'The Lord is righteous' (*Exodus 9:27*). Thou didst say, 'I know not the Lord' (*Exodus 5:2*), but thou wilt yet cry, 'I have sinned against the Lord your God.' " (*Exodus 10:16.*)

SPECIAL PROTECTION WITHIN THE FOLD

A shepherd went forth daily into the field and tended his flocks of sheep and goats. It happened that one day a stag joined the flock and grazed among them. When the herd was led into the fold, the stag went with the rest and remained in their midst. The shepherd was glad to welcome the stranger into his fold and grew to love him. His herdsmen were instructed to give heed that no harm befall the stag.

Surprised that the shepherd should single out this one animal for special care, the herdsmen said, "Thou hast so many sheep and goats and never sayest that we should guard them, but this stag thou wouldst have us look after with unusual watchfulness."

The shepherd answered them, "It is the custom of sheep and goats to graze in the fields and to return at eventide to the fold. But the nature of the stag is otherwise. It is his habit to wander into distant places. Therefore, since he has herded with our flocks, it is our duty to care for him, lest he wander away into forests where wild beasts roam."

Thus it was the custom of the Israelites to welcome proselytes into their midst. For when such a one elected to forsake the ways of the heathens, our forefathers were cautioned to guard and guide him, lest he return to the practices of idolatry.

RESPECT FOR PROPHECY REWARDED

A rumor had gone forth in Rome that a revolt of the Israelites was imminent. A numerous army was equipped to quell the uprising and punish the offenders.

The general at the head of this army was well acquainted with the customs of the Israelites. Indeed, he was inclined to adopt their belief and renounce the idolatrous customs of his own people, the Romans.

As was the custom in those superstitious times, he sought to discover by a sign what the outcome of his campaign would be. He shot an arrow and carefully observed the direction in which it pointed. The arrow fell towards Jerusalem. The general stood in a different position and shot another arrow. It, too, like the first one, pointed towards Jerusalem. He stood

in each of the two remaining directions, and each time a mysterious force turned the arrow's point toward Jerusalem. Amazed at the occurrence, the general

concluded that God Himself had ordained the destruction of the Holy City.

Firm in this conviction, he set out at the head of his army. But a secret uneasiness robbed him of rest and sleep. One day he met an Israelite lad and said to him, "Recite to me any verse in your sacred writings which you think of first."

The lad repeated a verse from the Prophet Ezekiel, who had declared that God would severely punish those responsible for the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.

The general, greatly alarmed, thought to himself, "If this is the case, I will be the instrument upon whom the wrath of God will descend. I refuse to act in such a way as to merit His anger." He thereupon dismissed his army and embraced the faith of the Israelites. This man was the forefather of the famous Rabbi Meir.

¶ ¶

ISRAEL'S SUPREMACY IN THE WORLD

If wines of different sorts are mixed together, one can not tell them apart. But if oil is mixed with all the wines of the world, it remains on top.

Similarly, if the Israelites obey the commandments, they stand above all the nations of the earth. "If thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe all His commandments which I command thee this day, the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all the nations of the earth."—*Deuteronomy 28:1.*

GOD AND THE IDOLS

A heathen said to Rabban Gamaliel, "Your God calls Himself a jealous God; He says that He will have no other gods before Him. In place of uttering threats, why does He not rather vent His wrath upon the idols themselves?"

The sage answered, "A certain prince had a disobedient and wayward son. This son had the audacity, among other misdemeanors, to give his dog the name of his own father. Upon whom did the prince vent his wrath, the dog or his own son?"

"But," argues the other, "were God to destroy all the idols there would be no occasion for man to err in that direction."

"That might be," replied the rabbi, "were all the objects of idolatry of trifling worth. But man worships also the moon, the sun, the stars, fire and water. Shall God, because of such folly, destroy His own creation? If a man steals seeds and scatter them on the ground, shall not the seeds bring forth fruit, even though they are stolen? Nature follows the laws which God has created, and the fools who abuse them are responsible for their own deeds."

HOW A HEATHEN WAS CONVERTED

A certain pious man owned an ox with which he daily plowed his fields. On the Sabbath, however, he permitted the beast to rest. It chanced that mis-

fortune overtook him and he was forced to sell the ox. The new owner, a heathen, yoked the animal to the plough each day, and on the Sabbath prepared for work as on the six previous days. But the ox refused to stir, despite the blows that were rained upon him.

The heathen sought the former owner and said to him, "Come and take back your ox. For six days he drew my plough, but he refused to work on the Sabbath day, though I have not spared the whip."

"Come with me," said the pious man. "I will see that the ox obeys your command."

Approaching the beast, he whispered in his ear, "While yet you belonged to me, the Sabbath was a day of rest for you as well as for me. I had no right to sell you to this heathen, but now I pray you, do your master's will."

Upon hearing these words, the animal arose and permitted itself to be yoked.

The heathen, surprised at its docility, exclaimed, "Have you bewitched the beast? I will not let you go until you have told me what you whispered in his ear."

The other willingly disclosed what he had said.

The heathen, upon hearing this simple explanation, exclaimed, "Is it possible that this beast which has neither understanding nor reason recognizes its Creator, whereas I, made in the Divine image and endowed with reason and insight, fail to obey the commands of the Most High!"

He thereupon forsook the ways of the heathen and became a zealous student of the Torah.

¶ ¶

ISRAEL'S DISPERSION

"I will sow her unto Me in the land."—Hosea 2:25.

Man sows that he may reap a hundredfold. God scattered the children of Israel among the nations of the earth so that the number of believers might increase a thousandfold. It was Divine favor that caused the Israelites to become scattered in every part of the world.

A Roman, boasting to a sage of Israel of the clemency of his country's administration, said, "You were more cruel than we; after his victory your King David destroyed the Edomites, while we permit you to live."

The sage replied, "Your clemency is the clemency of weakness, No matter how great the extent of your kingdom, your sword could not destroy the Israelites. There would yet remain certain of our people scattered in remote corners of the earth who would be a constant witness to the cruelty of your nation."

WHY THE EGYPTIANS WERE DESTROYED

When the Egyptians thought to destroy the Israelites, they said among themselves, "If we seek to scourge them with fire, their God may destroy us with fire as He did the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. But if we use water as our weapon, their God can not vanquish us, since He has sworn never again to destroy the world through a flood."

When God heard their insolent boast, he said, "Fools that ye are! Though I have sworn never again to destroy the whole world by a flood, yet ye wicked ones shall perish from the earth through water." Thus was Israel's implacable foe destroyed.

¶ ¶

REWARD AND PUNISHMENT

A king's son journeyed to the land of the barbarians, the inhabitants of which made him their ruler. When the king heard this, he said, "What honor shall I show those who have set my son as king over them? I will call the land by the name of my son."

After a time, however, they withdrew their allegiance from the prince and deposed him. Then said the king, "I will go and make war upon the land and rescue my son."

In a similar manner Joseph came to Egypt and was made governor of the land. God rewarded the Egyptians by making Egypt like a garden. But when, in later days, they made slaves of the Israelites, God said, "I will recall my words and Egypt shall be a desolation."

THE COMMON REJOICING

A heathen thus addressed Rabbi Joshua ben Karcha: "You celebrate festivals, and we, too, have festivals. Yet when we rejoice, you do not; and when you rejoice, we do not. Is there ever a time when we rejoice together?"

"Yes, when God sends rain to the earth," answered the rabbi. "In the words of the Psalmist, 'Thou hast remembered the earth and watered it.' "

¶ ¶

THE LIGHT OF KNOWLEDGE

While the Jews were under Roman rule, one of the officials sent the rabbis a message, saying, "Send us one of your lights."

"The administration has lights without number," said the rabbis among themselves, "lamps of every description, pearls, and other gems. Perhaps they want one who is a light in Israel."

They therefore sent Rabbi Meir, whose name signifies "one who imparts light". Many questions were directed to him, all of which he answered with wisdom.

WISE ADMINISTRATION IS THE MEANS TO NATIONAL PROSPERITY

Antoninus sent a message to a rabbi, saying, "My granaries are empty; what shall be done to fill them?"

The rabbi bade the messenger accompany him into his garden. He pulled up the tall stalks growing there and planted small ones.

"Pray give me a written reply to my master's question," said the messenger.

"It is unnecessary," responded the rabbi.

The man returned to his master, and when he was asked for the answer, he reported that none was forthcoming.

"Then what did he do?"

"He led me into his garden. Here he removed the tall stalks and planted small ones in their places."

Antoninus perceived the meaning of this act. He removed the ruling officials and substituted others, the result being that the storehouses in due time were filled with grain.

THE INTERPRETATION OF BIBLICAL PASSAGES

AN APPROPRIATE NAME

The mountain of the Lord had been known as Horeb since the creation of the world. But when God revealed Himself to Moses in the burning bush, the

name Sinai was given to the sacred mount, for the name is derived from "S'neh", which means thorn bush.

¶ ¶

GOD'S PRESCIENCE

According to Rabbi Akiba, God knew the work of the righteous and of the sinners from the very beginning. "For the Lord regardeth the way of the righteous.—*Psalms 1:6.*

The words of Genesis 1:2, "and the earth was without form and void", refer to the deeds of the evildoers, and the words "Let there be light," in the following verse, refer to the life of the righteous.

REDEEMING ONE'S PAST

Rabbi Meir asked his teacher, Rabbi Elisha ben Abuyah, for an explanation of Solomon's proverb, "Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof."

Rabbi Elisha replied, "A man may spend his youth in evildoing, and then repent and practice righteousness in his old age; or a man may study in his youth and retain nothing, and in his old age devote himself diligently to learning. Rabbi Akiba explained it in this wise, 'If the begining is good, the end will also be good.' "

"How would you interpret, 'The gold and the crystal can not equal it?' " continued Rabbi Elisha.

"Understanding of the Law is as difficult to acquire as are gold and crystal vessels," was Rabbi Meir's answer. Akiba offered this explanation, "As gold and crystal vessels, though broken, may be mended, so may a wise student make good that which he has forgotten."

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

"Behold thou are fair, my beloved."—Song of Songs 1:16.

Thou art fair through the practice of religious ordinances, through good deeds, through the observance of the commandments, through abstinence from what is forbidden, through acts of charity to the poor and to the stranger, through the giving of tithes, through prayer, and through repentance.

¶ ¶

THE RAM'S HORN

"And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram caught in the thicket by his horns."

When Abraham beheld the ram which he was to offer as a sacrifice in place of his son Isaac, God said to him, "As the ram is caught by the horns in the tangle of the thicket, so will thy children be ensnared by the nations,—by Babylon and Media, by Persia and Edom. But by the horns of the ram shall they be freed at last."

Rabbi Chanina said, "Every day throughout the year the children of Israel are entangled in sin, but on

the day of the New Year they sound the ram's horn. God hears them and forgives their wrongdoings. Thus the horn of the ram delivers them."

ISRAEL'S HISTORY MIRRORED IN NATURE

"For, lo, the winter is past,
The rain is over and gone;
The flowers appear on the earth;
The time of singing is come
And the voice of the turtle is heard
In our land."

Song of Songs 2:11, 12.

By winter is meant the slavery which our forefathers endured in Egypt. "The flowers appear on the earth." This has reference to Moses and Aaron. "The time of singing has come." This is the deliverance of Israel as well as the extermination of idolatry. The words, "The voice of the turtle is heard in our land," refer to the voice of the one who brings glad tidings, meaning Moses, who brought deliverance to Israel.

THE SABBATH

THE BLESSINGS OF THE SABBATH

Rabbi Jose ben Judah said that, when a pious man returns home from worship on the eve of the Sabbath, two angels accompany him, the angel of good and the angel of evil. The two spirits enter his abode with him.

Oh lovely sight! The Sabbath lamp gleams brightly and everything is in festive array.

The angel of good rejoices and says, "May thy house be blest with many such joyous Sabbaths!"

The angel of evil answers, though with reluctance, "Amen!"

But when the Sabbath lamp is unlighted, and the house is bare and in disorder, the angel of evil shouts triumphantly, "May thy Sabbaths be ever thus!"

And the good angel answers, in tears and sorrow, "Amen!"

¶ ¶

THE DISTINCTION OF THE SABBATH

A heathen prince, in a tone of mockery, said to Rabbi Akiba with reference to the holiness of the Sabbath, "Wherein lies the difference between this day and the other days?"

The rabbi answered, "Wherein lies the difference between thee and other men?"

"What!" cried the prince indignantly, "My king willed it so."

"Good! Our God also willed it so," retorted the rabbi.

THE GIFT OF THE SABBATH TO ISRAEL

"And God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it."—Genesis 2:3.

The first and second days, the third and fourth, the fifth and sixth, formed pairs, but the seventh day remained alone. When the Sabbath Day lamented that it was without companionship, God said, "Thou, too, hast a comrade, for Israel shall be with thee."

When the Israelites stood at the foot of Mount Sinai, God reminded them of the promise He had made, that the whole congregation of Israel should be the associates of the Sabbath Day.

MOSES

THE FORTUNATE RESCUE OF MOSES

The daughter of Pharaoh loved the little Moses as though he were her own son. One day Pharoah himself was fondling the child. Suddenly the little one stretched up his hand, took the king's crown from his head, and set it upon his own.

The wise men of Egypt, seeing this act, took counsel among themselves, saying, "Perchance he who takes Pharaoh's crown and places it upon his own head is the one who some day will destroy the power of Pharaoh."

Some of those present proposed killing him. Jethro, however, believed that the child was yet too young to have shown judgment in the matter, and he suggested that a test be prepared. "Let a dish full of gold and another one filled with glowing coals be brought. If the child tries to seize the gold, it will be proof that he has judgment and ye shall put him to death. But if he reaches for the coal, it will be proof that he lacks understanding and ye shall spare him.

The test was made in accordance with Jethro's suggestion. Moses stretched out his hand and reached for the gold, but the angel Gabriel thrust Moses' hand aside so that it lay hold of the glowing coals instead. He quickly put some of them into his mouth. The heat burned his tongue so severely that from that time forth Moses was tongue-tied and could speak only with great difficulty.

THE TEST OF THE LEADER

While Moses was a shepherd in the wilderness, tending the flocks of his father-in-law Jethro, a young lamb strayed away from the fold. Moses left the flock and set out in search of the missing lamb. He found it a long distance away, eagerly drinking from a spring.

"Thou poor little creature," said Moses, pityingly, "I did not know that thou didst wander away to quench thy thirst. Thou must be weary after so long a journey."

He placed the young animal upon his shoulders, and carried him back to the sheepfold.

Then God said to Moses, "Since thy heart is filled with compassion for this lamb, how much more will it be stirred to pity at the sufferings of thy fellow creatures. Thou hast proved thy worth. Come and be My shepherd and lead My flock, Israel."

MOSES' PLEA IN BEHALF OF THE ISRAELITES

The friend of a certain king entrusted him with ten pearls. The friend died, leaving a daughter whom the king married in the course of time. The king made her a present of a chain set with ten pearls as a wedding gift.

Soon after, she was unfortunate enough to lose the chain, and when the king heard of it, he was wroth. "I will drive her from the palace!" he exclaimed in his anger.

A friend of the queen came to plead for her, but the king refused to listen to him and repeated, "I will discard her."

When pressed for a reason, the king said, "She has lost the ten pearls I gave her."

"My lord king," rejoined the friend, "thou shouldst not continue to vent they wrath upon her."

But the king would not be convinced. The friend, seeing that nothing would assuage the king's anger, said to him, "Thou wouldst disown her because of the ten pearls which she lost? I know that her father once gave thee ten pearls to guard for him. Let them compensate for the loss of the others."

When the Israelites worshipped the golden calf, God's anger was kindled against them. He bethought Himself to destroy them, but Moses pleaded for them: "Forgive them, O Lord, for not having regarded Thy ten commandments, and let the ten temptations of Abraham make amends for their sins."

RESPONSIBILITY INCREASES WITH EXPERIENCE

A king who owned a barren field said to his gardener, "Go till the field, plant a vineyard in it, and tend it."

The gardener obeyed the king's instructions. He planted the vineyard and took excellent care of it. In due time the grapes were ripe, but the wine which they produced was sour.

Disappointed in his hope, the king said, "Destroy the vines. What shall I do with a vineyard which produces only sour wine?"

The gardener answered, "My lord king, it has cost thee much to plough the soil and to harrow it, to plant the seed and to tend it till harvest time. Wouldst thou now destroy it? If the wine is sour, remember that it is because the fruit is yet young. Let but a few seasons pass and the wine will become sweet."

Thus, when the children of Israel worshipped the golden calf, God wanted to destroy them. Moses, however, pleaded for them. He reminded God that the Israelites were young, like the first-year grapes, and that they had as yet had little experience in resisting the temptations of the heathen nations. He promised God that before long the Israelites, gaining in knowledge with each passing day, would reject entirely all foreign gods and devote themselves exclusively to the worship of the One God.

Moses' intercession was not in vain, for the Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do and Israel was saved.

WHY LEVI WAS NOT NUMBERED WITH THE REST OF ISRAEL

When the children of Israel were numbered, the tribe of Levi was not included among them.

Thus God said to Moses, "When thou dost number the Israelites, thou shalt number the Levites apart from them, since the Levites are My attendants." An earthly king, whose army consists of many legions, does not have his bodyguard counted with the vast hosts, since those attendant upon him are accounted of higher rank.

Moses, not knowing the reason for this order, was at first overcome with fear, for he thought, "Perchance there is a blot upon the tribe to which I belong and for that reason God has commanded me not to number it with the others."

But God reassured him, saying, "It is because the Levites are to be spared when the others die that I have commanded thee this thing. When thou didst say, 'Who is on the Lord's side?' all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to espouse My cause and to fight against My enemies. Just as they have consecrated themselves to Me, so shall I always be near to them."

THE NOBILITY OF INTERCESSION

When God in His righteous anger determined to destroy the Israelites for worshipping the golden calf, Moses sought to intercede for them, saying, "Why doth Thy wrath wax hot against Thy people? Is it because they have made a golden image? Thou didst not forbid it."

"Did I not declare in the second commandment, 'Thou shalt not make unto thyself a graven image'?

Moses replied, "Thou didst speak those words unto me alone, O God, not to them. If indeed I have sinned, if I have made an image to worship, then wipe off my name from the Book of Life."

When God saw that Moses would gladly sacrifice his life for his people, He said, "For thy sake will I give the Torah unto them."

WIT AND WISDOM

THE DEFEAT OF THE TEMPTER

Rabbi Meir once found it necessary to flee from Palestine on account of persecutions. He stopped at an inn in Armenia, in which a number of guests were being served with pork. Several of them, believing that they recognized the fugitive, decided to put him to the test by seeing whether or not he would eat with them.

Rabbi Meir seated himself among the guests and apparently partook of the food. In reality, however, he dipped one finger into the dish and carried another one to his mouth.

"It is not Rabbi Meir," they said among themselves.

His strategem thus stood him in good stead and permitted him to make his escape.

¶ ¶

LIKE REBECCA BUT NOT ELIEZER

Rabbi Joshua once reached the gates of a city where he found a young girl drawing water from a spring.

"Pray, give me a drink," said the rabbi.

"Gladly", answered the girl, proffering him the water and also permitting his camel to drink its fill.

"My daughter," said the rabbi, "you remind me of Rebecca, who said to Eliezer, the servant of Abraham, 'Drink, my lord, and I will draw water for thy camels also.' "

"It is true that I followed the example of Rebecca, responded the girl, with a smile, "but, unfortunately for me, you did not imitate that of Eliezer."

A TIME TO PLANT AND A TIME TO PLUCK

A rich merchant undertook a long sea voyage with his son, taking with him many of his treasures.

The crew of the ship, noticing the valuables, conceived the wicked scheme of getting possession of them. They conspired among themselves and finally decided to throw the merchant and his son overboard.

The father, whose suspicions were aroused by certain unguarded words and gestures, bethought himself of a way to circumvent the plotters.

Hastily acquainting his son with the situation, he pretended to engage in a heated dispute with the young man. Angry words led to blows and finally the father exclaimed in simulated fury, "Now you get what you deserve!" at the same time seizing the treasures and throwing them into the sea before the eyes of the astonished crew.

Dazed at this turn of circumstances, the crew allowed the two passengers to remain unharmed. Soon after, upon their arrival at the harbor, they related the story to the magistrate and were compensated for their losses.

A RABBI'S WIT

It was the custom of a certain innkeeper to arouse at midnight the travelers who had sought shelter under his roof, saying, "Come and make ready to depart. I will accompany you."

When the guest, thus forced against his will to leave, reached the highway, robbers attacked him and despoiled him of his possessions, which they shared with the innkeeper.

Rabbi Meir once sought lodging at the inn and the host, as was his custom, came at night and said, "Come and make ready to resume your journey. I will go with you."

Rabbi Meir answered, "I am waiting for my brother."

"Where is he?"

"In the synagogue."

"What is his name? I will go and summon him."

"His name is,—Light."

The innkeeper went to the synagog and stood at the door all night, calling the name again and again, but received no response. At daybreak Rabbi Meir made ready to depart.

The innkeeper asked him, "Where is thy brother for whom thou art waiting?"

"He is come," was the reply, for light had arrived to bless the traveler on his way.

HUMAN AND DIVINE COMPASSION

In the days of Rabbi Tanchum there was a severe drought in the land. The inhabitants came to him and begged him to appoint a fast day on which they might pray for rain.

The rabbi yielded to their desire, but the days passed and still no rain fell.

Finally the rabbi addressed the congregation, saying, "My friends, be merciful to one another, then God will show mercy unto you."

Shortly after, several eye-witnesses reported to the rabbi that they had seen a certain man giving money to his divorced wife, an act which the people of those times considered wrong. The rabbi sent for the man and inquired the reason for his act.

"Rabbi," said the man, "it is true that she is my divorced wife, but my heart went out to her in compassion when I saw her need."

The rabbi lifted his eyes to heaven and said, "Lord of all worlds, if this man's heart is stirred to pity for one for whom he is no longer responsible, how much greater will be Thy compassion upon the sons of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

The prayer was answered and rain fell to bless the earth.

STANDING THE TEST

A traveler from Jerusalem, in the course of his journey, came to a certain town, where he fell ill. Realizing that death was near, he called his host, to whom he entrusted his valuables, saying, "If my son comes hither from Jerusalem and demonstrates his wit by doing three clever things, give him my possessions; but if he fails to do so, withhold them."

Shortly after, the man died. In due time, his son arrived. When he reached the gates of the town, he inquired for his father's friend, but no one would tell him the name of the street in which the man resided.

By chance he caught sight of a man carrying a heavy load of wood. "Will you sell me that wood?" he inquired.

"Yes," was the reply.

"Here is your pay," said the stranger, at the same time giving instructions that the wood be carried to the home of the man whom his father had been visiting.

Following the footsteps of his guide, the young man soon reached the residence, of whose location he had been in ignorance. This was the first clever stroke.

He introduced himself as the son of the deceased, was made welcome and invited to share the family meal.

There were five roasted chickens brought to the table at which sat the host and his wife, his two sons, his two daughters and the guest. The host requested the stranger to carve.

"That is not for me to do."

"But it is my wish," said the host.

Hereupon the young man divided the five chickens. He gave one to the host and hostess, another he divided between the two sons, the third he gave to the two daughters, and the remaining two he kept for himself.

They began to eat and nothing was said concerning the extraordinary conduct of the guest. This was the second clever stroke.

The evening meal consisted of a fat hen. Again the host requested his guest to carve. This time he gave the head to the master, the inward portion to his wife, the thighs to the two sons, the wings to the two daughters, and the remainder of the fowl he retained for himself. This was the third clever stroke.

"Is it the custom to carve thus in Jerusalem?" asked the master of the house, "I said nothing at the first occurrence, but I can not refrain from remarking upon it now."

"You will remember that I was reluctant to carve the fowls, but did so at your request. Now I will explain my conduct. At the first meal there were five chickens to be divided among seven persons. I reasoned thus: You, your wife, and one chicken made *three;* your two sons and another chicken made *three;* your two daughters and another chicken made another *three;* two chickens and I again made *three.* The problem of an equal division was thus solved. At the next meal I gave the head to you, for you are the head of the household; the inner portion I gave to your wife, as a symbol of fruitfulness; the two thighs I gave to your sons, who are the pillars of your house; the two wings were the portion of your daughters, who will soon fly from your home and settle in the homes of their husbands. The rest, which is boat-shaped, I kept for myself, for I came hither in a boat and shall go hence in one."

"I am satisfied that you are indeed the son of my friend," remarked the host. "Here is your legacy. May prosperity be with you."

A CHILD'S PRECOCITY

An Athenian met a child in the streets of Jerusalem. Handing the lad a piece of money, he said, "Go and buy me something of which I may eat my fill and have enough left for the remainder of my journey."

The child returned in a little while bringing a bag of salt.

"Salt!" cried the Athenian. "Surely I did not desire you to buy salt."

The child replied, "Did you not say I was to buy something of which you could eat as much as you pleased and have enough left to eat on your journey?"

The Athenian admired the ready wit of the lad and smilingly went his way.

¶ ¶

A RETORT IN KIND

An Athenian requested a child in Jerusalem to buy him some eggs and cheese, handing him a coin for the purpose.

When the little one returned with the purchase, the man said, "Show me which cheese was made from the milk of a white goat and which from that of a black goat."

"First tell me which eggs were laid by a white hen and which by a black one!" replied the child.

THE TRICKSTER OUTWITTED

A native of Jerusalem stopped at an inn at Athens where many guests were seated, partaking of food and drink. After satisfying his hunger, he requested that he be given lodging for the night.

One of those present remarked, "It is our custom not to permit any stranger to remain until he has performed three leaps."

"I do not know how to go about it," said the Jerusalemite. "Show me and I will imitate you."

The man arose and leaped into the middle of the room. Another spring brought him to the door, and a third carried him beyond the threshold.

Thereupon the stranger locked the door behind him. Turning to the rest of the company, he remarked, "His jest has carried him farther than he thought. What he meant to do to me, I have done to him!"

QUAINT MIDRASHIC STORIES

WHY THE CREATION OF MAN WAS FEARED

"Let us make man."—Genesis 1:26.

When God created man, it was with the knowledge that both the righteous and the wicked would people the earth. He said, "If I create man, he will beget sinners; yet if I create him not, how shall the righteous be born?"

What did God do? He put from before His eyes the way of the sinners, and bethought Himself only of the good.

When God thought to create the first man, the angels were of different opinions. The angel of mercy believed that he should be created, for he would bring loving kindness into the world. The angel of truth feared that wrong and deceit would thereby fill the earth. The angel of justice thought that he should be created so that the world might learn the beauty of charity. The angel of peace feared that strife and discord would ensue.

What did God do? He took Truth and cast her down to the earth. The angels said, "God of all worlds, why dost Thou despise our sister Truth?"

Then God answered, "Ye shall see that Truth will ever rise whence she is cast down."

"Truth springeth out of the earth."—*Psalms 85:12.*

WHY EVE WAS CREATED FROM THE RIB

"And the rib which the Lord God had taken from man made He a woman."—Genesis 2:22.

God bethought Himself of which part of Adam's body to create a woman. "I will not create her of his head, lest she hold her head too proudly; nor of his eye, lest she be too inquisitive; nor of his ear, lest she hear too much; nor of his mouth, lest she talk too much. I will not choose the hand, lest she handle what concerns her not; nor the foot, lest she go astray. I will make her of a hidden part, in order that she may be modest." And thus Eve was created from the rib of Adam.

¶ ¶

A WOMAN'S WIT

In his march of conquest, Alexander of Macedon came to a town near Carthage which was inhabitated solely by women.

They came out to meet him, saying, "If you make war upon us and conquer us, it will be said of you, 'Alexander has destroyed an army of women.' If, on the contrary, we defeat you, the world will know that Alexander was overcome by women and your name will be dishonored."

As Alexander prepared to leave the town, he wrote upon the gates, "I, Alexander of Macedon, was a fool until I came to this town and learned wisdom from women."

LOVE REQUITED

A man of Sidon who had been married ten years without being blessed with offspring determined to divorce his wife. For this purpose he induced her to accompany him to the home of Rabbi Simeon ben Jochai.

Said the rabbi, "As your marriage was honored by a wedding feast, so also let there be a feast to celebrate the dissolution of the marriage contract.

In accordance with the rabbi's advice, a feast was prepared to which their friends were invited. In the course of the merrymaking, the host turned to his wife and said, "I beg that you take with you whatever you consider of greatest value in my house and then return to the home of your father."

Having drunk heavily of wine, he sank into a profound sleep. The woman thereupon bade her servants carry their master to her father's house where, after several hours, the man awoke, amazed to find himself in strange surroundings.

"Where am I?" he asked.

"In the home of my father," replied the woman.

"What have I to do here?"

"Did you not bid me take the greatest treasure in your house and return with it to the home of my father? Behold, you are in my eyes the most valuable of possessions.

The man was touched by such a display of devotion. The couple again repaired to the rabbi, who lauded the fidelity of the loyal wife and bade them live together as before. Soon after God blessed the childless couple with a son.

THE SYMBOLIC PLANTS OF SUCCOTH

During the Feast of Tabernacles, also called the Feast of Ingathering, there are four plants used which are to remind us of the four elements of nature: fire, air, earth, and water.

The Bible teaches us that for each of these four elements we owe special thanks to God.

We are commanded to use the citron, whose deep yellow hue resembles fire.

We are to use the palm, whose lofty branches grow high into the air.

The myrtle, one of the lowliest of plants, grows close to the ground. It symbolizes earth.

The willow of the brook, which grows best beside the stream, represents the last element, water.

WHEN THIEVES FALL OUT

It was decreed by the Divine Will that the earth be destroyed by flood. The family of Noah alone was to survive, together with one pair of all living creatures.

From every part of the earth, driven by an irresistible force, they came creeping, running, or flying to the sheltering ark, upon the threshold of which the good Father Noah stood ready to welcome them, one after the other.

Who should appear at the door of the ark but Deceit, who begged in a pleading voice, "O good Father Noah, let me too enter and receive shelter."

Noah looked with wonder and suspicion upon the newcomer and said, "Go, for thou art without a companion and I accept only such as come in pairs."

Enraged at this reception, Deceit took her departure. She chanced to meet Injustice, who, seeing her dark and somber countenance, inquired,

"Whence comest thou? Whither art thou going? What seekest thou? What is thy sorrow?"

"I am come," answered Deceit, "from the ark of Noah. I sought shelter, but he will accept only those who come in pairs. Wilt thou be my companion?"

"Upon what terms? I accept no companionship without profit," said Injustice.

"No fear but that the union will be to our advantage. I will make a path and lay a snare and thou shalt capture the spoils."

Deceit and Injustice agreed upon the treaty and then appeared before Noah. The patriarch could no longer deny them entrance and they were permitted to enter the ark.

When the waters had subsided and the earth was again peopled, the two companions set about their labors. The victims of Deceit were mercilessly enmeshed in the snares of Injustice.

Deceit at last approached her companion and said, "Where are the fruits of my industry and skill? Let us share the profits."

"Fool!" responded Injustice. "Hast thou forgotten the conditions? It is thy duty to spread the net, but mine are the spoils."

¶ ¶

THE REASON FOR THE SACRIFICIAL CULT

Were burnt sacrifices pleasing in the sight of God? Why did He charge Israel to offer up sacrifices?

It was a permission rather than a command. For God said to the Israelites, "Think not that your sacrifices have the power to sway My will or that I take delight in them. It is yourselves that are pleased with the performance of the act."

Then why did the Law permit the burnt offering?

The son of a certain king, instead of eating at the royal table, was accustomed to feast with worthless companions, from whom he acquired pernicious habits. The king found this out and said, "Henceforth my son shall always eat at my table; thus he will learn better habits."

Thus, at one time, when the Israelites had fallen into evil ways, they offered various sacrifices to false gods, which practice they pursued with great zeal and delight. Then God said, "Bring your offerings to Me; at least they will not be laid upon the altar of false gods."

THE ANGEL OF DEATH

Rabbi Joshua ben Levi was known for his great piety. As the end of his days drew near, God said to the Angel of Death, "Do all that My servant asketh of thee."

The Angel of Death appeared before the rabbi, saying, "Thy time is come to depart from this world; if there is aught thou wouldst ask of me, speak and it shall be granted."

Rabbi Joshua replied, "I would see the place in Paradise that hath been prepared for me."

The Angel of Death answered, "Come with me and I will show it to thee."

"Pray give me thy sword, lest it strike me," said Joshua. The angel handed it to him, and they went together to the wall of Paradise.

The Angel of Death lifted his companion up and placed him upon the wall saying, "Behold thy place in heaven."

Rabbi Joshua leaped from the wall into Paradise, but the Angel of Death seized the hem of his garment, crying, "Get thee gone from here."

"By the Eternal, I will not," swore the rabbi.

The Angel of Death was not permitted to enter Paradise and it was therefore powerless to act. But the ministering angels surrounding the throne of the Eternal cried, "Lord of all worlds, see what Rabbi Joshua hath done. By force hath he entered Paradise."

The Eternal bade His angels discover if the son of Levi had ever broken his oath upon earth. When they brought word that he had always kept his vow, God

permitted him to remain in Paradise as he had sworn to do.

When the Angel of Death heard that Rabbi Joshua was to stay, he demanded his sword.

Before delivering it into the angel's hand, the rabbi said, "Swear to me that henceforth when thou takest the souls of men, thou and thy sword will remain invisible." The angel promised to grant the wish, and since that time he has walked unseen upon the earth.

¶ ¶

"THE PATHS OF GLORY LEAD BUT TO THE GRAVE"

"Naked shall he go back as he came."—Ecclesiastes 5:14.

A fox came upon a vineyard which was surrounded by a fence on all sides. There was, however, a narrow opening, but the fox could not force his way through. He bethought himself what to do and finally decided to fast three days. After his fast he became thin enough to push his way into the vineyard. There he ate his fill of the delicious grapes.

When he was ready to depart, he found that he had grown too stout to make his way out, and again he fasted three days, after which he was able to make his exit.

Turning toward the vineyard, he exclaimed, "Vineyard, thou art good, and luscious are thy fruits! Everything about thee is pleasant and lovely, but of what profit are all thy delights? As one enters thy domain, so must he leave them."

SELECTION ACCORDING TO FITNESS

Before God delivered the commandments on Mount Sinai, each of the mountains said, "I am chosen as the site of the giving of the Law."

But God answered them, "Quarrel not, ye hills; all of you have profaned my sanctuary; upon all of you has idolatry been committed, save Sinai, which alone is worthy to be chosen."

When Solomon was about to build the Temple, all the tribes clamored for the honor of being selected.

"Are ye deserving of the glory?" asked God. "No; all of you took part in the selling of Joseph to the Egyptians, except Benjamin. In the tribe of Benjamin, therefore, shall the Temple be built."

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Page

AN EASTERN SHEPHERD, by E. M. Lilien 3

ANCIENT ATTITUDE AT TABLE..... 4

MEN WORKING IN A FIELD. From a picture "Syrian Plough," in Kitto's "Palestine."..... 7

COINS. From Tillotson's "Palestine."..... 8

ALTAR. From a drawing "The Golden Altar" in Kitto's "Palestine."..... 11

THE TEMPLE OF SOLOMON..... 12

BRACELET. From a drawing in Rawlinson's "Story of the Nations—Phoenicia."..... 13

ANCIENT SAILING VESSEL. From a drawing on a tomb in Pompeii..... 14

OLIVE PRESS. From a picture in Kitchin's "Scripture Teaching."..... 18

ANCIENT JEWISH FUNERAL. From Kitto's "Palestine." The Talmud mentions the use of trumpets in the funeral processions..... 19

THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON, by E. M. Lilien. This magnificent drawing, aside from its splendid suggestion of power and wisdom, illustrates the ancient method of bookmaking by dictation..... 21

A VINEYARD..... 22

THE SCAPEGOAT. From a painting by W. Holman Hunt. Bible Reference, Lev. 16:10..... 31

A DUNGEON..... 34

THRESHING FLOOR. From a drawing in Foster's "The Story of the Bible."..... 41

A FIELD OF BARLEY. After a drawing by Herman Struck. Barley is frequently mentioned in the Bible. Next to wheat, it formed the chief cereal and ingredient of bread in Palestine, especially for the poorer people... 42

ALEXANDER THE GREAT. The conquest of Palestine by Alexander made a deep impression on the Jewish mind, which survived in legend and nomenclature .. 44

STORM AT SEA..... 47

VESSELS OF THE SANCTUARY. From a drawing in Kitto's "Pictorial Sunday Book."..... 60

THE DENARIUS. A Roman Coin used in Judea..... 61

THE ANCIENT HARBOR OF CAESAREA. From a drawing in "The Land and the Book" by W. M. Thomson. During the Second Jewish Commonwealth, Caesarea was one of the most prosperous cities in Palestine.. 66

A WINEPRESS. From a drawing in Kitto's" Palestine."... 69

A POTTER. From a drawing in Tillotson's "Palestine."... 70

A PITCHER. From a drawing in Kitchin's "Scripture Teaching."..... 73

AN ANCIENT STREET IN JERUSALEM..... 80

A HAND-MILL. From a drawing in Kitchin's "Scripture Teaching."..... 84

THE BREASTPLATE WORN BY THE HIGH PRIEST. From a drawing in Kitto's "Pictorial Sunday Book."..... 85

TOWER OF BABEL. From the picture of Birs Nimrod (supposed remains of the Tower of Babel), in Tillotson's "Palestine."..... 88

"VICTORY, O LORD!" From a painting by Sir John E. Milais. The hands of Moses are upheld by Aaron and Hur..... 89

A MARKET. From an excellent picture "Der Markt in Jafa," in H. Guethe's "Palestina."..... 93

MORNING PRAYER. From a painting by Ed. Moyse. Modern..... 106

THE SACRIFICE OF THE POOR. From a drawing by Melville..... 111

BASKET OF FRUIT. From a drawing "Bringing First-Fruits to Jerusalem."..... 114

WASHING HANDS. From a drawing in Thomson's "The Land and the Book," Vol. I..... 116

ELDERS AT THE GATE. From a drawing in the Fuerst Bible. The gate of the city was the main resort for barter, social intercourse, and the administration of justice..... 120

A FIG TREE. From a drawing in Thomson's "The Land and the Book."..... 138

THRESHING IN PALESTINE. From a drawing in the Fuerst Bible..... 142

THE SCROLL OF THE TORAH..... 149

A LAMP..... 151

A MEZUZAH..... 152

THE VILLAGE WEAVER. From Bryce's "Impressions of Palestine."..... 154

WELL AND BUCKET. From Kitto's "Nations of the World." 155

TITUS. The Roman General who destroyed the Temple at Jerusalem in the year 70 C. E..... 161

AN EASTERN SHEEPFOLD. From a picture in Kitchin's "Scripture Teaching."..... 163

JERUSALEM. From painting by Thomas Seddon..... 164

ANCIENT PLOUGH AND YOKE. From Kitto's "Palestine." 167

MT. SINAI. From painting by Elijah Walton..... 172

DRASHA. From a woodcut by Lucien Pissarro..... 173

A SHOFAR..... 174

SHEPHERD CARRYING A LAMB..... 179

ETHROG AND LULAB..... 195

INDEX

The references are to pages.
The entries are strictly by title of story, including the articles a, an, and the.

AARON as Peacemaker 54
A Child's Precocity 190
Adonoy Echod—The Lord Is One 125
A Forgiving Husband 79
A Jewish Martyr 118
A Legacy Strangely Safeguarded 81
A Lesson in Forbearance 55
All Honest Effort Has Its Uses 7
Always Be Prepared for Death 39
A Merchant as Judge 87
An Appropriate Name 172
A Quaint Analogy with regard to Israel 38
A Rabbi's Wit 186
A Remarkable Conversion 158
A Retort in Kind 190
As a Father Pitieth His Children 109
A Time to Plant and a Time to Pluck 185
A Witty Retort 56
A Woman's Wit 193

BENEFITS Not Forgotten 66
Blasphemy's Undoing 161
Blessing in Disguise 133

CAUGHT in His Own Trap 32
Charity Rewarded 47
Charity Twice Blest 45
Children Are the Glory of Their Fathers 82
Creation Reveals the Creator 107

DAVID as Judge 73
Dishonesty Defeats Itself 43

ELIJAH'S Perplexing Blessings 99
Every Generation Has Its Potent Influence 133

FAITH Triumphant 89
Filial Piety Knows No Price 85
Finite Man Can Not Grasp the Infinite God 130
Friends the Richest Blessing 60

GOD and Man 144
God and the Idols 166

God Hates the Sin, Not the Sinner 53
God Humbles Those Who Know Him Not 162
God Is Everywhere 128
God Is Love 146
God Raiseth the Poor from the Dust 62
God's Chosen 137
God's Names Suggested by His Attributes 127
God's Paternal Care of Israel 135
God's Prescience 172
God's Ways Not Man's Ways 146
Good Deeds Surpass Everything 94
Greatness Is Relative 16
Guard Thy Tongue 10

HARSHNESS Misunderstood 82
Honor Thy Father and Thy Mother 86
How a Heathen Was Converted 167
How to Avoid Sin 30
Human and Divine Compassion 187

INDEBTEDNESS to God 113
Ingratitude 36
In the Presence of God 106
In Union There Is Strength 147
Israel Compared with the Dove 140
Israel, the Light of the World 151
Israel, the World's Redeemer 139
Israel's Best Guarantee 147
Israel's Dispersion 168
Israel's Faith Justified 105
Israel's History Mirrored in Nature 175
Israel's Supremacy in the World 165

JUDGE Not by Appearances 53
Justice the Personal Equation 75

KING David and the Spider 136
Knowledge Is Greater than Wealth 21
Knowledge Redeems 52
Knowledge the Basis of Righteousness 18

LEARNING Dignifies All Men 23
Learning Is Greater than Gold 2
Learning More Desirable than Wealth 22
Life and Its Law 6
Life as a Voyage 14
Like Rebecca but Not Eliezer 184
Like to Like 143
Lost Opportunities 38
Love Requited 194
Love the Basis of Filial Duty 84

Lovingkindness the Mark of Humanity 59
Loyal unto Death 95

MAN—Human and Divine 30
Man Immortal 108
Man Never Forsaken by God 134
Martyrdom for Religion's Sake 120
Measure for Measure 96
Mercy Surpasses Everything 64
Misery Calls for Good Deeds 48
Moses's Plea in Behalf of the Israelites 180

NEGLECTED Opportunity 10
Never Too Late to Repent 34
Noblesse Oblige 150
No Compromise 117
No Escape for the Guilty 87

OBVERSE and Reverse 92
Ostentatious Charity 48

PEACE 148
Performance of Duty Irrespective of Reward 8
Preferable Alternatives 17

RECOGNIZING Just Claims 71
Redeeming One's Past 173
Religion Fortifies against Suffering 115
Repent in Time 40
Repetition—a Discipline 24
Respect for Authority 76
Respect for Prophecy Rewarded 164
Responsibility for Wrongdoing 35
Responsibility Increases with Experience 181
Reward according to Deeds 7
Reward and Punishment 169
Rising above Sorrows 11
Royalty Its Own Herald 131

SCRUPULOUS Honesty 42
Seeing God 132
Self-Denial the Best Charity 46
Selection according to Fitness 200
Special Protection Within the Fold 163
Standing the Test 188
Stewardship Worthily Fulfilled 49
Strict Honesty 41
Surmounting Difficulties 1
Sympathy Alleviates Suffering 57

THE Angel of Death 198
The Authority of the Dead Oft Surpasses That of the Living 76

The Balm of Life 86
The Beauty of Holiness 174
The Blessing of the Sabbath 176
The Choice between Reward and Punishment 17
The Chosen People Also the Choosing People 153
The Common Rejoicing 170
The Defeat of the Tempter 184
The Destroyer of Idols Undaunted 123
The Discipline of Repentance 39
The Distinction of the Sabbath 176
The Far Reaching Effects of Slander 70
The Fortunate Rescue of Moses 178
The Fugitive from Temptation 34
The Gift of the Sabbath to Israel 177
The Glory of Service 65
The Honored of God 78
The Importance of Both Written and Oral Law 154
The Inexcusable Sin 31
The Joy of the Righteous 159
The Law and Immortality 156
The Law and the Parables 155
The Light of Knowledge 170
The Light of the Torah 157
The Merit of the Fathers 107
The Merit of the Fathers 134
The Nobility of Intercession 183
The Noblest Sacrifice 51
The Organs Which Man Controls 16
The Path of Righteousness Is Pleasant 17
The Paths of Glory Lead but to the Grave 199
The Pillars of the World 59
The Poor Woman's Sacrifice 60
The Power of Environment 23
The Power of Justice 68
The Power of the Tongue 93
The Prayer of the Upright Is His Delight 110
The Ram's Horn 174
The Reason for the Sacrificial Cult 197
There Is None Like God 126
The Reward of Labor 9
The Reward of Merit 141
The Righteous Are the Chosen of God 20
The Significance of Israel's Survival 142
The Spirit Hallows the Sacrifice 111
The Survival of Israel 145
The Symbolic Plants of Succoth 195
The Test of the Leader 179
The Test of the Righteous 70
The Thorn-Bush as a Symbol of Israel 160
The Torah Compared to Water 157
The Trickster Outwitted 191

The Uses of Wisdom..... 29
The Value of Paternal Example..... 112
The Way through a Labyrinth..... 156
The Written and the Oral Law..... 149
Three Ennobling Virtues..... 68
Times and Seasons Are in God's Hands..... 138

UNDERVALUING Human Life..... 88
Unquestioning Faith..... 104

VALUES..... 152
Varied Standards of Justice..... 44

WAIT for the End..... 19
We Will Do and We Will Hearken..... 150
Wealth a Trust..... 64
Wealth Is Often Useless..... 12
What Gold Can Not Purchase..... 45
What Is Most Desirable in Life..... 58
What God Does Is Wisely Done..... 102
When Thieves Fall Out..... 196
Why Eve Was Created from the Rib..... 193
Why Jacob Had an Easy Death..... 125
Why Levi Was Not Numbered with the Rest of Israel..... 182
Why the Creation of Man Was Feared..... 192
Why the Egyptians Were Destroyed..... 169
Wise Administration Is the Means to National Prosperity.. 171
Wisdom Better Than Gold..... 25
Wisdom Is God's Special Gift..... 24
Wisdom on Life's Path..... 28
Wisdom—to Whom Vouchsafed?..... 28
Words Fall Short..... 129
Work Is a Duty..... 9
Wrongdoing Never Excusable..... 69